THE Nation.

KEN BURNS'S *WAR*
ERIC ALTERMAN

MODERNISM'S MUSIC
DAVID SCHIFF

RUDY'S DIRTY MONEY

GIULIANI COZIES UP TO BIG OIL BILLIONAIRES
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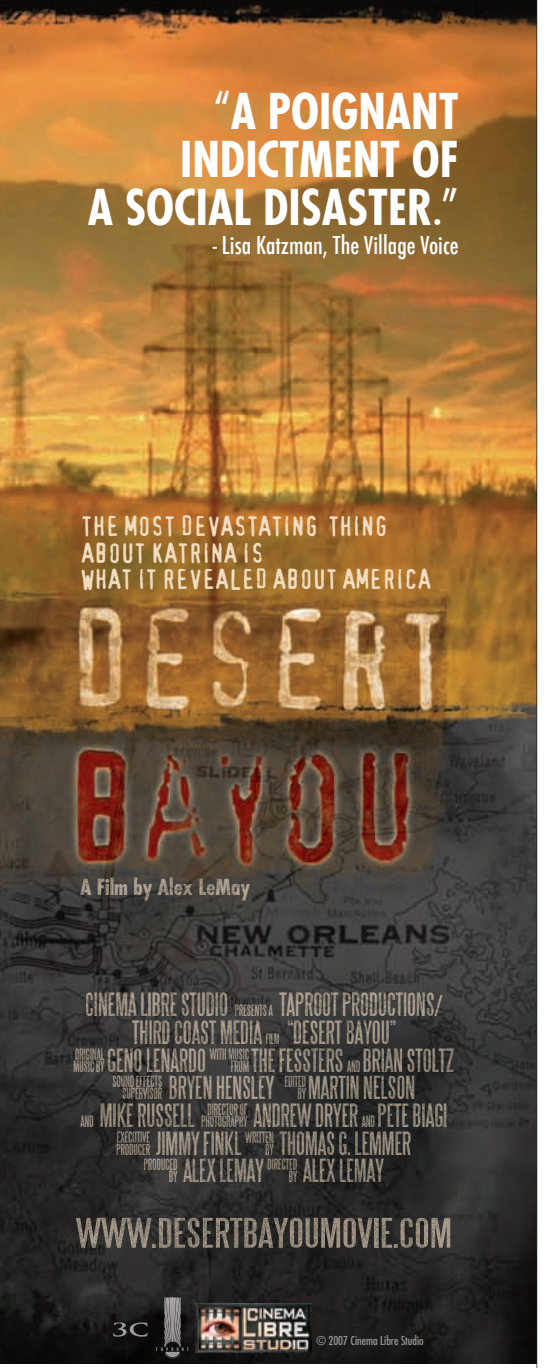
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Letters

THE NEW JEWISH ACTIVISM...AND SILENCE
The Nation.
KENTUCKY AT WAR
THE BLUEGRASS ROOTS TARGET MITCH McCONNELL OVER IRAQ by BOB MOSER

Poor? Don't Get Sick

Burbank, Calif.
Katha Pollitt's "Poverty Is Hazardous to Your Health" should be required reading for all Americans ["Subject to Debate," Oct. 8]. The trouble is, there are conservatives without compassion who think they could never be in the position of Dr. Barry's patient. They think the reason is that they've made "good choices" and this woman hasn't. Guess they wouldn't have had that child—oops, but they oppose abortion and often contraception. I guess they just would never have had sex. (Ha!) Pollitt's column makes me more outraged than ever at conservatives' lack of sympathy for the poor.
Trudy Ring

Huntsville, Ala.
I don't know how often Katha Pollitt's doctor friend deals with cases of head lice in her impoverished patients, but there is a simple remedy. Mayonnaise, applied liberally to the hair and scalp and combed through with a fine-tooth comb, will kill lice and get rid of nits. Unlike with Nix or Rid, if you don't get all the critters out with the first application, it is safe to reapply the mayonnaise immediately. Furthermore, the stuff is a marvelous hair conditioner. A jar of mayonnaise costs about $2 and can be paid for with food stamps. I learned this tip from my daughter's school nurse and can testify that it works. I doubt if y'all will publish this note from an Alabama janitor, but please do pass it along to Dr. Barry.
Stacie Helphand

Orono, Me.
I am saddened to see that not much has changed since my days in an inner-city health clinic. I now work in a health center at the gateway to northern Maine. Rural poverty adds one extra burden—geography. While the urban and suburban poor at least have access to centers like the one at Yale, like the woman Pollitt mentions, the rural poor often have to travel three or four hours for health services.
Alan Garber, md

letters@thenation.com

Bourbon, Bluegrass & DitchMitchers

Nashville
Vive la Révolution, Louisville! [Bob Moser, "Kentucky at War," Oct. 1] As a native, I don't hesitate to defend my hometown every time (and there have been many, many times) a Northerner has snubbed my state for its "hillbilly" past. True, there are rednecks in Kentucky. But you can go as far east as Kennebunkport and as far west as Monterey, and you will still find rednecks.

I also don't hesitate to correct people who assume that Kentucky is lumped in with the red states. As Bob Moser says, Kentucky and the rest of the South is a purple area. I know how the people of my hometown work politically—they have common sense, they know injustice when they see it and they aren't afraid to speak up when they see those injustices. Bravo, LAPC! Bravo Ditch Mitch! And Bravo Louisville! I raise my late-night bourbon to you.
Rachel Hoover

Owensboro, Ky.
Thank you for this article! I retired recently and have been catching up on the oil wars and the systematic destruction of rights in the United States. It's scary, very scary. The Ditch Mitch group will hear from me tomorrow.
Debbie Beane

Sonoma, Calif.
I laughed out loud at the creativity of the protesters and truth seekers in Kentucky. I hope other communities get ideas from them. I feel less alone when I march carrying a sign these days, knowing others across the nation are doing it.
Julie Jones

Thrifty Is Nifty

Franklin, NC
Jerry Mander and John Cavanagh's "Beyond 'Green Shopping'" [Sept. 24] brought back memories. We of a certain age recall a few things about World

(continued on page 24)

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Pre-empt Preventive War

This week marks the fifth anniversary of Congress's vote to authorize the overthrow of the government of Iraq by military force. The consequences of that vote have been disastrous. More than 3,800 US soldiers and 70,000 Iraqi civilians have paid with their lives. If Congress passes Bush's recent request for additional war funding, which appears likely, the cost of the war will exceed $600 billion. These are among the more measurable tolls of the Iraq War, and they are immense and unforgivable.

EDITORIAL

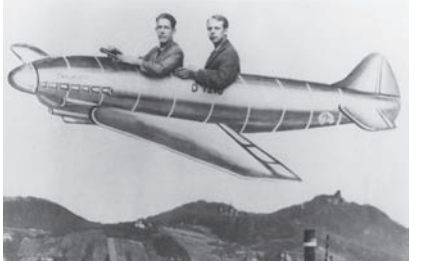
When Congress approved the Authorization of Use of Military Force Against Iraq, however, it did more than permit an illegal and unjustified attack on Iraq; it enshrined the Bush doctrine of "preventive war" and intensified a potentially unending "war on terror." As *The Nation* warned in its "Open Letter to the Members of Congress" on the eve of the 2002 vote, "The decision to go to war has a significance that goes far beyond the war.... It declares a policy of military supremacy over the entire earth.... It accords the United States the right to overthrow any regime—like the one in Iraq—it decides should be overthrown." Moreover, by abdicating its duty to declare war, Congress created a leviathan—an executive branch of unbalanced and unaccountable power. With that vote Congress transformed the country from a constitutional republic into an imperial bully led by an imperial President.

The Administration's excuses for invading Iraq—its ties to 9/11 and Al Qaeda; its weapons of mass destruction—have disintegrated, but the twin concepts of "preventive war" and the "global war on terror" remain. They present not only the greatest obstacle to leaving Iraq but also the greatest threat for escalating war beyond Iraq's borders, most immediately to Iran.

As in the run-up to the Iraq War, the Bush Administration has rolled out shifting and unverified justifications for strikes inside Iran. And as one of its rationales for targeting the Tehran regime—its supposedly imminent possession of nuclear weapons—was contradicted by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Mohamed ElBaradei and US intelligence experts (who estimate that Iran is at least five years away from developing a bomb), the Administration skated to its other *casus belli*: terrorism. Led by George W. Bush, the Administration has accused the Iranian Revolutionary Guards of training and arming Shiite insurgents who have killed US troops in Iraq, which it calls an act of terrorism. Gen. David Petraeus reinforced such claims when he called the Iranian ambassador to Iraq "a Quds Force member" of the Revolutionary Guards. Whatever the truth of these allegations, they are illegitimate grounds for war with Iran. But by declaring Iran an agent of terrorism, the White House may claim that the only approval it needs to strike Iran is the 2002 Iraq War authorization.

That Bush is sounding the drumbeat for a wider war is predictable; that he has once again found an enabler in Congress is gravely disturbing. On September 26 twenty-nine Democrats, including presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton, joined forty-six Republicans to pass the Kyl-Lieberman amendment, which accuses Iran of fighting a proxy war against Iraqi and coalition forces and classifies the Revolutionary Guards as "a foreign terrorist organization."

We've been down this road before, and we must not take one more step. The path back to sanity begins by repealing the Kyl-Lieberman amendment and by passing a resolution sponsored by Senator Jim Webb (lately endorsed by Clinton) that would prohibit the use of funds for military action against Iran without Congressional authorization. But the



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NEWS & ANALYSIS

Robert Scheer: The Martyrdom of Che Guevara

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AROUND THE NATION

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WEB LETTERS

Continuously published reader mail

Webb resolution merely reasserts Congress's constitutional power to declare war in this particular instance. It does not end the Iraq War, repeal the war authorization, overturn the Bush doctrine of preventive war, curtail the war on terror or reduce our military footprint in the Middle East. Congress must find the will to take such bold measures. If it cannot, the American people must demand it.

The China Syndrome

COMMENT

It doesn't take much to ratchet up the anxiety of American parents. Reactions to the ongoing revelations about tainted products from China took a seismic leap this summer when Mattel recalled millions of toys found to be contaminated with lead paint. These included brands in the top rank of children's consciousness—Sesame Street, Dora the Explorer and Barbie. As the recalls continued for contaminated toys and other defective products, the company's apologies came thick and fast, including to the government of China (and implicitly to the global business community) for having jeopardized the entire "Made in China" operation. Bob Eckert, Mattel's CEO, has had to issue unusually strenuous assurances to consumers ("Because your children are our children, too") that the safety of children is paramount to the company.

But no such assurances are likely to be offered to the workers in the firm's South China supplier factories, who routinely handle toxic materials as part of their job. Nor has the media had anything to say about their plight. For every American child who might come in contact with a contaminated toy train, thousands of teenage girls toil twelve hours a day, inhaling poisonous fumes in factories that are often firetraps, for a pittance. These workplace hazards have been well documented over the years by the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee, Asia Monitor Resources Center, China Labor Watch and the National Labor Committee. But antisweatshop activists in these organizations have been unable to prick the conscience of toy consumers as effectively as they have with garment shoppers.

That may change, and not just because of the toy scare. The problems with imports from China began last spring with deaths caused by melamine-laced pet foods retailed by Del Monte, Nestlé Purina and Menu Foods. Next to kids, pets are the most vulnerable and intimately loved of all family members, and so the anxiety hit home quickly. And the list went on: dodgy drugs, defective automobile tires, poisonous toothpaste, combustible computer batteries, toxic seafood. By the end of the summer, every product sent from China was suspect. Politically, the scandals were a godsend for China-bashers on Capitol Hill and talk-radio, where many smug lectures were offered to Beijing about how to put its regulatory house in order.

CEOs like Eckert had much more to worry about. The vast sums they spend on building and polishing corporate brands is all about winning consumer trust, which can evaporate overnight when tainted products show up. In addition, companies shell out an estimated $31 billion annually on "corporate social responsibility" PR, aimed in large part at redeeming brands tarnished by sweatshop exposés. Yet headlines about contaminated goods in onshore shopping baskets are much more threat-

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Noted.

RUDY'S GOT BEEF: Giuliani raised eyebrows recently when he visited **Geno's Steaks** in Philadelphia. The cheese-steak joint was thrown into the national spotlight last year when owner Joey Vento put up a sign telling patrons, "This Is America: When ordering, please speak English." Since **Rudy Giuliani**'s GOP rivals have attacked him for making New York a "sanctuary city" for undocumented immigrants, a little cred from the Minuteman crowd could be just what he needs. The visit also highlighted a part of Giuliani's past he dearly wants to preserve: his unwavering support of law enforcement. Geno's has long been a shrine to the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police. Most provocative is the slogan employees wear on their shirts: "Officer Danny Faulkner was murdered by **Mumia Abu-Jamal** who shouldn't be in an 8 x 10 foot cell…He should be six feet closer to hell." From its crackdown on jaywalkers to the shootings of **Amadou Diallo** and **Patrick Dorismond**, Giuliani's NYPD was frequently embroiled in controversy, but Rudy stood behind it. His visit to Geno's may have been intended to remind GOP voters of his law-and-order bona fides. If he can ride this message to the White House, Geno's could be his Bob Jones University. MATTHEW BLAKE

THEY SAID WHAT? "My job is a decision-making job. And as a result, I make a lot of decisions.… I delegate to good people. I always tell **Condi Rice**, 'I want to remind you, Madam Secretary, who has the PhD and who was the C student. And I want to remind you who the adviser is and who the President is'… I got a lot of PhD types and smart people around me who come into the Oval Office and say, 'Mr. President, here's what's on my mind.' And I listen carefully to their advice. But having gathered the device [*sic*], I decide, you know, I say, 'This is what we're going to do.' And it's 'Yes, sir, Mr. President.' And then we get after it, implement policy."

—President **George W. Bush**
to a crowd in Lancaster, Pa., October 3

"I intend to win in November 2008, and then I intend to build a centrist coalition in this country that is like what I remember when I was growing up."

—Senator **Hillary Clinton** to the *Washington Post*, October 10
(Hillary grew up as a Goldwater girl.)

IN MEMORIAM: On September 25 the Palestinian national movement lost one of its most courageous and farsighted leaders. **Haidar Abdel-Shafi**, co-founder of the Palestine Liberation Organization, died of cancer at 88 in his hometown, Gaza City. His insistence on hardheaded realism and adherence to principle earned him the love and respect of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and throughout the diaspora. The late **Edward Said**, a friend and colleague, admired Abdel-Shafi's "sense of calm decency," observing that he was "not principally a political man, but someone whose life and relatively few words suggest an abiding sense of Palestinian nationalist struggle."

Abdel-Shafi's finest hour may have been the speech he gave at the opening of the international peace conference in Madrid in the fall of 1991. With eloquence and dignity, he made the case for Palestinian independence and an end to Israeli occupation. "We are willing to live side by side on the land," he said. "Sharing, however, requires two partners willing to share as equals. Mutuality and reciprocity must replace domination and hostility."

Selected by PLO leader **Yasir Arafat** to lead the post-Madrid talks with the Israelis, Abdel-Shafi insisted that Israel conform to international law and agree to remove the settlements in the territories. Israel's refusal to budge on this crucial point and its continued settlement expansion led Abdel-Shafi to quit the negotiations in 1993. For the same reason, later that year he condemned the Oslo Accords that Arafat had negotiated secretly with the Israelis. Like Said, Abdel-Shafi presciently saw that nothing in that agreement would prevent the Israelis from further expropriations of Palestinian land. The movement has now descended into civil conflict, but the news of Abdel-Shafi's death temporarily united Fatah and Hamas in praise for the grand old man of Gaza. ROANE CAREY

'OOPS, MY BAD': "I do terrible interviews routinely," **Jon Stewart** announced to his **Daily Show** audience recently, harking back to the oddly hostile exchange he had in April with *Blackwater* author and *Nation* contributor **Jeremy Scahill**. Referring to Blackwater's role in Iraq, Stewart skeptically quizzed Scahill, "Why is that a terrible thing?" Following the recent barrage of news reports documenting Blackwater's crimes, Stewart mocked his own ignorance. After replaying a clip from the interview, he said, "It's almost as though I don't know what the [bleep] I'm talking about." Note to Stewart: Jeremy accepts your apology and looks forward to being back on the show to talk about **Blackwater**.

VACATION HOT SPOTS: A series of studies released by the **US Geological Survey** in September have environmentalists worried about the fate of the world's remaining 25,000 polar bears. The reports predict that global warming will wipe out two-thirds of the polar bear population by 2050. You might be asking yourself what this means for walruses, ivory gulls, little auks and other Arctic wildlife. Studies show that the Arctic is the fastest warming place in the world, and in the past 500 years, human activity has forced the extinction of 820 species. But consider this silver lining: if you want to see these beasts before they're gone, you can book a ticket on a "climate" tour—where you can witness firsthand the effects of global warming (and add your own carbon footprint). There are several outfits to choose from, and you'll be pleased that they're quite affordable—for only $5,000 (airfare not included) you get a twelve-day trip to **Warming Island** near Greenland with Betchart Expeditions Inc. According to its website, the island, long underwater, has been revealed by melting ice: it's "a compelling indicator of the rapid speed of global warming." So why let **Leonardo DiCaprio** have all the fun? KATHRYN LEWIS

CHÁVEZ SINGS: President. Chomsky fan. Castro confidant. To these laurels **Hugo Chávez** can add "recording artist": with the release of his album of Venezuelan folk songs, to be distributed, free. (Inspired by **Radiohead**, clearly.)

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ening to brand reputations than disclosures about substandard working conditions in offshore factories.

As the branding crisis deepened, officials in Washington and Beijing rushed to protect the lucrative US-China trade. Congressional committees called hearings, the Consumer Product Safety Commission was urged to upgrade its procedures and corporations that have long resisted third-party monitoring of their offshore suppliers' workplaces leapt to embrace independent testing and monitoring of their imports. Beijing, for its part, closed down some factories, beefed up inspections and even executed its former chief of food and drug regulation. But all these measures are about containing the damage close to the point of consumption, and none of them get to the root causes of the problems, which lie in the factories themselves and in the contracting chain of command.

Citizens of affluent countries are used to thinking that their dirtiest and most dangerous industries (not to mention their waste products) can be sent offshore, out of sight and out of mind. But these risks are not exported to the global South on a one-way ticket. They return to us through their toxic side effects in consumer commodities and food. Many environmental problems are local in character and can be contained, but unfettered free trade means that now almost everyone can be exposed to hazards that originate thousands of miles away. This year's product safety scandals have delivered that message loud and clear.

Thirty years ago, ecology pioneer and Citizens Party founder Barry Commoner argued that environmental protections have to be assured at the point of production. It is ineffective to deal with products' environmental impact further along in their life cycle, and least of all at their endpoint, waste disposal. In the decades since Commoner pointed this out, global manufacturers and their subcontracting chains have emerged as the most destructive example of how to ignore his lesson. Abdicating responsibility for protecting workers and their environment at the bottom of the chain is a threat to life and limb all along it.

If American consumers want assurances, there is no point in waiting for Beijing or Washington to take action. Companies have to be forced to recognize that the best way to guarantee consumer safety is to ensure adequate workplace protections and benefits in the lowest of their supplier factories. If you sicken workers there, chances are you will sicken, and alienate, your precious customers here. The publicity from this year's recalls hands activists a perfect opportunity to promote that lesson in the lead-up to the holiday buying season. For it is in these peak delivery months that South China's factory workers are driven hardest and most brutally to make America's children, and its CEOs, the happiest people on earth. ANDREW ROSS

Andrew Ross, who teaches at New York University, is the author, most recently, of Fast Boat to China: Lessons From Shanghai *(Vintage).*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

On Larry Craig's Decision To Serve Out His Term in The Senate

The presence of L. Craig dismays
Republicans, since it displays
An issue they don't want to raise:
That people who are gay these days
May not be two male fiancés
Who go in drag to cabarets
And cuddle lengthways on a chaise
And talk of opera and ballets.
The people who are gay these days
May be Republicans who praise
The right wing's antigay clichés.
Hypocrisy, which this conveys,
Could make it awkward bashing gays.
But count on them to find some ways.

Iraq: The Other Surge

Perversely, and entirely unintentionally, recent US-caused events in Iraq have sparked the one thing capable of both forcing an end to the American occupation and uniting the people of Iraq around a common purpose: Iraqi nationalism. Last seen, briefly, during the summer, when the Iraqi soccer team's victory brought its countrymen out in the streets in all shades of ethnic and sectarian variety, nationalism in Iraq has been revived recently as a result of three simultaneous US actions.

COMMENT

Those events are, first, the misguided effort, led by Senator Joe Biden, to partition Iraq into three mini-states, which passed the Senate 75 to 23 September 26; second, the September 16 killing of seventeen Iraqis by trigger-happy Blackwater security forces in a traffic-clogged Baghdad square; and third, the continuing American pressure to force the partial privatization of Iraq's oil, part of which, in Kurdistan, was illegally gobbled up in September by Ray Hunt of Hunt Oil, one of George W. Bush's Texas chums. Any one of these events would have been guaranteed to spark outrage among most Iraqis, but taken together they have galvanized nationalism to a degree unprecedented since the 2003 invasion. All three have been seized on as leverage by Iraqi political forces that oppose the fifty-four-month occupation of Iraq.

The Biden resolution sparked near-apoplectic outrage among vast swaths of Iraqis. The Cabinet declared, "The Iraqi government categorically rejects the resolution." The Iraqi Parliament voted to condemn it. "Iraq is not a US property," said a spokesman for the Sunni-led National Dialogue Front. The Association of Muslim Scholars, which calls itself the political arm of the Iraqi armed resistance, stated, "The Senate's adoption of [the] resolution…is not shocking, because [partitioning the country] was one of the objectives behind the invasion of Iraq." Indeed, from Richard Perle to David Wurmser, who recently resigned as Vice President Cheney's

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chief Middle East adviser, the neoconservatives who pushed for the war eagerly embraced the notion of redrawing the map of the region, and it didn't stop at Iraq's borders.

Meanwhile, the Blackwater massacre brought into sharp focus what, for Iraqis, has been one of the ugliest parts of the occupation: the arrogant behavior of the US diplomatic and military convoys in the streets of the capital. At best, these cowboy convoys are a painful reminder that the country is occupied, as they set up arbitrary roadblocks, speed through oncoming traffic in the wrong lanes and routinely smash through stopped or parked vehicles. At worst, they engage in criminal assaults against civilians. The most recent Blackwater incident crystallized a long-simmering resentment that has touched off a showdown between the Iraqi government and US authorities. Even subservient Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki declared that Blackwater is "unfit to stay in Iraq."

The Hunt Oil deal with the Kurds, one of several pending oil contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars, may have put the last nail in the coffin of the US effort to force Iraq to rewrite its oil laws. Like the Biden resolution and the Blackwater shooting, the Hunt deal unleashed pent-up anger among Iraqi Arab leaders, who called the deal illegal, since under current Iraqi law only the central government in Baghdad, not the Kurds, can approve oil deals. The nationalization of Iraq's oil in 1972 by Saddam Hussein, after a decades-long struggle between Iraq and the Anglo-American oil cartel, was a landmark event, the first major oil nationalization in the region since the Iranian government of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh took over the British oil interests there and, for his efforts, was toppled in 1953 by a CIA-engineered coup inspired by that cartel. In Arab Iraq, if not in Kurdistan, the national oil industry is sacrosanct. If the United States intended to confirm Iraqis' belief that the invasion was about grabbing their country's oil, the US effort to open up the industry to foreign investors is perfectly designed to do so.

All of this is roiling Iraqi politics. Across the political spectrum, on both the Sunni and Shiite sides of the divide, a nationalist bloc is emerging to challenge the alliance of Kurdish and Shiite separatists that has governed Iraq for three years under American tutelage. To be sure, such a coalition faces enormous obstacles that could stifle it in the cradle. First, it would have to overcome the staunch opposition of US occupation forces, still aligned in support of the Maliki government and the Shiite-Kurdish alliance that underpins it. Second, thanks to four years of US support, that alliance controls the Iraqi armed forces, the Iraqi police, the Interior Ministry and several powerful private armies—including the Badr Organization and the Kurdish pesh merga—which will oppose the new coalition. And the leaders who are trying to build cross-sectarian ties will have to overcome the entrenched Sunni-Shiite hatreds.

Still, the emerging nationalist bloc could get enough votes in Parliament to topple Maliki's shaky coalition. Its components include two major Shiite factions, Muqtada al-Sadr's bloc and the Fadhila (Virtue) Party, which together hold forty-seven seats in Parliament; the entire Sunni bloc, led by the Iraqi Accord and the National Dialogue Front, which have fifty-five seats; and the secular bloc led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, which controls twenty-five seats. In addition, say well-placed Iraqi sources, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Maliki rival in the ruling Islamic Dawa Party, has upward of twenty Shiite deputies in his camp, and Jaafari is negotiating to be part of the new alliance. The addition of Jaafari's bloc would give the alliance at least 147 votes, a clear majority in the 275-member assembly. On September 26 Tariq al-Hashimi, the Sunni vice president, announced the formation of a National Pact project intended to unify the emerging bloc, and he promptly traveled to Najaf to get Shiite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's blessing for the effort. Hashimi's twenty-five-point plan, similar to one launched earlier by Allawi, calls for equality for all Iraqis, an end to sectarian killing, opposition to foreign interference in Iraq, support for the legitimate right of armed resistance and a declaration (aimed at Al Qaeda) that "terror is not considered resistance."

Outside parliamentary politics, there is much more happening. On the Sunni side, the emergence of the Awakening, a bloc of Sunni tribal leaders, has brought a large portion of the former armed resistance into Iraqi politics, and they are nearly all fierce nationalists. At the same time, a group of twenty-two Iraqi resistance groups announced in early October that they had formed a coalition led by a former top Baath Party official from the Saddam era, Izzat al-Douri, widely recognized as the leader of the resistance. Allawi, the former prime minister and a secular Shiite, declared that he had opened political talks with Douri's resistance faction. For the first time since 2003, both major parts of the resistance—the tribal militias and the former Baathists and ex-military officers—are directly engaged in politics in the new Iraq. The Douri faction declared its willingness to negotiate a cease-fire with the United States, on the condition that Washington declare its timetable for leaving Iraq.

On the Shiite side, meanwhile, the Sadr faction and Fadhila have emerged as the dominant powers in eastern Baghdad and south Iraq, eclipsing the supremacy of the Badr Organization, the militia of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), backed by both Iran and the United States (a strange irony, given that SIIC, of all the Shiite factions, is closest to Iran). Sadr and Fadhila have pulled out of the United Iraqi Alliance, the ruling Shiite coalition. If elections were held today, Sadr and Fadhila would likely sweep the Shiite-dominated parts of Iraq, reducing SIIC and Dawa to mini-parties. Sadr has sent envoys to Sunni Arab countries, proposed a joint Sunni-Shiite effort to rebuild the Samarra mosque damaged by Al Qaeda bombers, taken part in a Saudi-backed effort in Mecca to create a Sunni-Shiite clerical dialogue in Iraq and quietly engaged in talks with Sunni and secular factions in Baghdad. Not only that, in late August Sadr declared a unilateral six-month truce, ordering his forces to stand down, and, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, he is secretly involved in talks with US military officials. It may be too much to hope for, but just as the United States finally decided to join the Sunni tribal resistance forces rather than fight them, it's possible that farsighted US officials would be willing to work with Sadr rather than confront him, too.

If so, the United States will have potential partners in both the Sunni and Shiite parts of Iraq who can assume control of Iraq when the United States leaves and who, so far at least, seem more than willing to talk to each other about an ar-

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rangement to halt sectarian killing and ethnic cleansing. The problem is, both America's newfound Sunni allies and the powerful Sadr-Fadhila bloc are united most of all by their opposition to the US occupation. (Both the Sunni bloc and Sadr are also united by their opposition to Al Qaeda and to Iran's heavy-handed influence in the country.) Earlier this year, they united in Parliament on two nationalist bills: the first called for the United States to set a timetable for leaving Iraq, and the second demanded that the Iraqi government submit for parliamentary debate any plan to extend the United Nations mandate for the US occupation beyond December, when it expires.

The Catch-22 of the American occupation is this: Iraqi nationalism is the only political force capable of uniting Sunni and Shiite Arabs and thus putting an end to the sectarian civil war, but for the past four years the United States has systematically worked to suppress nationalism. Instead, beginning with Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003, the United States deliberately apportioned political posts using an ethnic- and sectarian-based formula. Since then, US occupation authorities have favored separatists, such as SIIC, which wants a separate Shiite enclave in the south, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which are angling for an independent state in Iraq's north. It's no mystery why: nationalists would be the least willing to accommodate the preferred American goal of an Iraq that is at once docile, neutral in the Arab-Israeli conflict, tolerant of a long-term US presence, willing to serve as a base for US military operations in the region and ready to hand over their oil wealth to Western investors.

ROBERT DREYFUSS

Robert Dreyfuss, a Nation *contributing editor, is the author of* Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam.

Her McGovern Moment

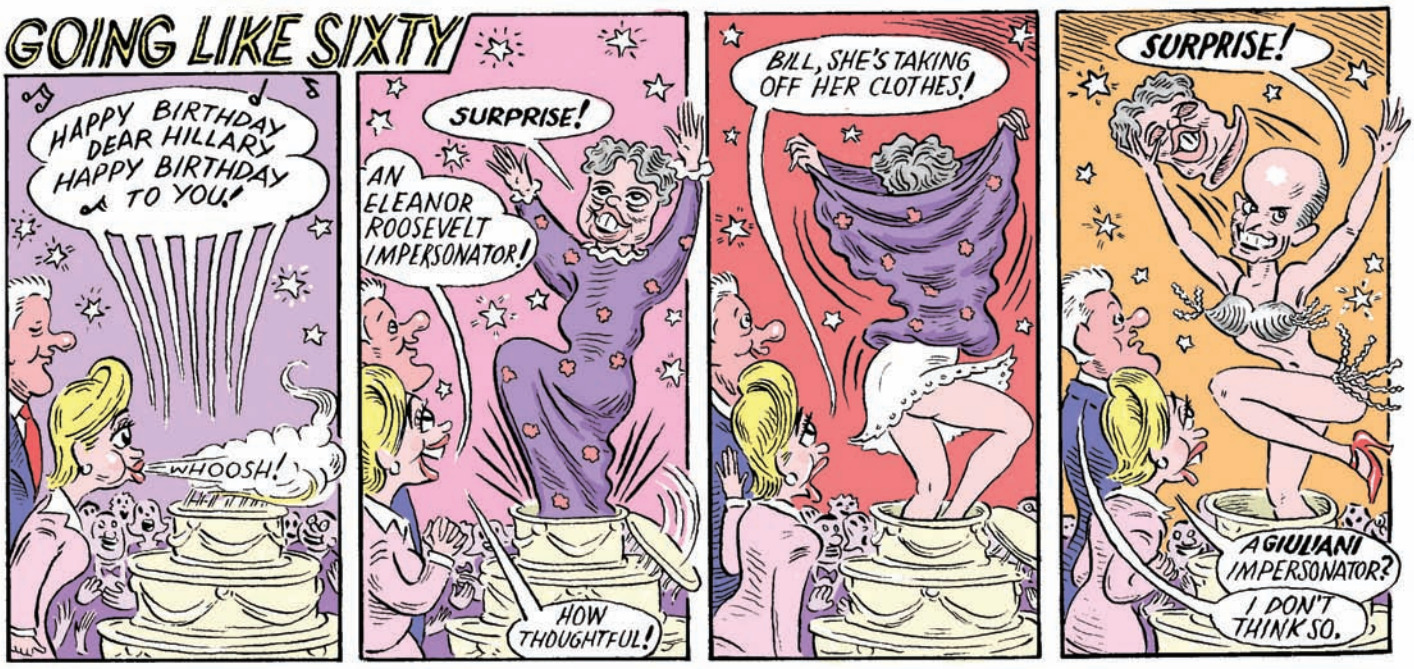
For three decades, top Democrats kept George McGovern at arm's length. Unlike Republicans, who made quick peace with Barry Goldwater after his overwhelming 1964 defeat, prominent Democrats disdained their nominee of 1972. The Democratic Leadership Council echoed GOP warnings about liberal "McGovernism" well into the 1990s.

But a funny thing has happened on the way to the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. Leading contender Hillary Clinton did not merely accept McGovern's endorsement at a recent Iowa rally. She told the crowd she might find a place in her administration for him. Why is Clinton reaching out to McGovern? She's smart. The New York senator understands that the 85-year-old McGovern has achieved senior statesman status. Indeed, he jokes, "If everyone who stops me in the airport to say they voted for me in '72 actually had, I'd have won by a landslide." But Clinton also knows that support from an early and ardent foe of the Iraq War helps calm concerns among antiwar Democrats who have never warmed to her candidacy.

McGovern cuts Clinton no slack for her 2002 vote to authorize Bush's Iraq War. But he argues that Clinton understands the war must end. "She said if by any chance Bush were to continue the war that after 2008 she'd terminate it," he tells doubters. "That's about all you can expect." There are plenty of Democrats who expect more, and rightly so; Clinton's rhetoric about how "the era of cowboy diplomacy is over" sounds fine, but her vagueness on withdrawal from Iraq and her tough talk on Iran raise questions about whether the spurs are really off. That said, Clinton's recognition of the value of McGovern's endorsement says something important about the frontrunner: unlike less savvy Democrats, she realizes that the old antiwarrior now stands in the mainstream of her party and the nation. JOHN NICHOLS

Comix Nation

by ROBERT GROSSMAN



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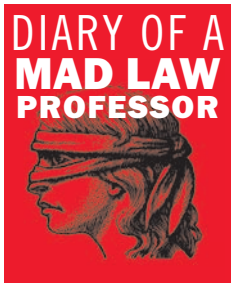
Patricia J. Williams

Strange Culture

In May 2004 Steve Kurtz's life was turned upside down. Kurtz, a founding member of the award-winning collective Critical Art Ensemble, was a tenured art professor at SUNY, Buffalo. His work and that of the collective was of a kinetic conceptual sort, much of it aimed at informing audiences about the lack of regulation and potential risks of genetically modified (GM) food. Shortly before his show was to open at MASS MoCA, a museum in North Adams, Massachusetts, Kurtz's wife of twenty years died in her sleep. When police responded to his 911 call, they saw petri dishes in his home—part of the scheduled installation—filled with bacteria cultures. They called the FBI.

At that point, the nation was still reeling from the 2001 anthrax scares. Kurtz was detained (not arrested, not charged but held beyond the range of due process, under the USA Patriot Act) on suspicion of bioterrorism. Within days, FBI tests showed that there were no harmful biological agents in his house and that his wife had died of natural causes. But the case against Kurtz has not gone away. Forced to drop charges of weapons manufacture, a federal prosecutor charged mail fraud against both Kurtz and Robert Ferrell, a professor of genetics at the University of Pittsburgh who sent Kurtz the uncontestedly harmless, legal, unregulated bacterial cultures used in his artwork. The "fraud" alleged is that they did not reveal, in a requisition form, the purpose of the mailing. Neither the University of Pittsburgh nor Buffalo has asserted fraud, and neither Ferrell nor Kurtz believed that there was anything fraudulent in their dealings. The allegation of fraud is made exclusively by the federal prosecutor—a first as far as anyone knows.



Even assuming that there was a defrauded party, one wonders why any putative misrepresentation regarding paperwork isn't being handled as a civil rather than a criminal matter. But to give it the ultimate Kafkaesque twist, the charges against Kurtz and Ferrell have been pursued under the Patriot Act. This means that the sentence for otherwise ordinary crimes will be doubled. Since mail fraud carries a sentence of ten years, Kurtz and Ferrell each face a possible sentence of twenty years.

After all this time, the prosecution has yet to set a date for trial. For the record, I do not like commenting on cases before they are resolved in court. That said, the implications of Kurtz and Ferrell's continued prosecution are far-reaching enough to warrant comment. The dropped charges make it clear that this case has nothing to do with the threat of terrorism or Al Qaeda or violence. Yet Steve Kurtz, like Andy Warhol, works in a genre of art that inverts, performs and challenges the iconography of common understanding. If Warhol made us re-examine the representational power of a Campbell's Soup can, Kurtz opens up the proverbial can and takes a good hard look at what's inside. His art is designed to label GM food, even though it is not marked for consumers except in the European Union. He illustrates the processes by which that food is engineered as much as grown, and how corporate control of that genetic modification challenges the notion of what we think of as farming.

Consider *Monsanto Canada v. Schmeiser*, the subject of one of Kurtz's exhibitions. Percy Schmeiser, former mayor of Bruno, Saskatchewan, is the owner of a family canola farm. In the early 1990s Monsanto patented a gene in a variety of canola resistant to common weed killers. With Monsanto's seed, one could spray weed poison over the face of the earth, and if everything else were obliterated, these plants would spring forth in the emptiness, bushy and green. Indeed, it was precisely the relentless liveliness of said canola plants that nudges the story forward. In 1997, some of Schmeiser's canola plants were found flourishing in areas that had been sprayed with an otherwise comprehensive weed killer. Yet Schmeiser Enterprises had never purchased Monsanto seed and was never party to Monsanto's licensing agreement, which required farmers to pay royalties on each replanting of any seeds with this particular immunity. Farmer Schmeiser's plants were probably cross-pollinated by accident—anything from the wind carrying the seed to a sack of seed dropped from a truck to plant roots from a neighboring farm migrating beyond the lawyerly dictates of property boundary. Nevertheless, in 2004 the Supreme Court of Canada held that it didn't matter how the seeds ended up on Schmeiser's farm: if he harvested and thereby profited from the weed-resistant canola plants on his land, Schmeiser could be found guilty of patent infringement. The case has raised questions: if genetically modified organisms cross-pollinate with other plants, do we all become sharecroppers eternally indebted to corporate seed gods? This question brings us back to Kurtz. If the stuff of life is corporatized, does art about it become a form of interference in business? Does education about GM food become a theft of trade secrets? And if Kurtz is not accused of bioterrorism, why are he and Ferrell still being prosecuted so aggressively for something as seemingly minor as failing to fill out a requisition form?

But there are other questions, particularly in academia, where Kurtz's case has caused a storm of apprehension: Kurtz is, after all, not the only professor or artist seen as trouble. Recently scholars from around the world have been barred from the United States for reasons stated and unstated, but all in the name of Homeland Security. They include a South African peace activist, a Canadian antipoverty worker, an Iraqi epidemiologist, most Cuban academics, a Greek economist, a British musician, a Bolivian historian. And as other countries have adopted their own versions of Homeland Security, the tables are turning on our own: Medea Benjamin, founder of the exuberant antiwar group Code Pink, was denied entry to Canada because of her numerous arrests for peaceful acts of civil disobedience. Anyway, I hereby attest to the above as based on my best knowledge and good faith. I plan to mail this to my mother. In case I've made a mistake, I'd hate to risk twenty years for mail fraud. For more information about this case go to caedefensefund.org. ■

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Eric Alterman

Burns's *War*: What Is It Good For?

The War, directed and produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, is a strange, lumbering beast. In the past few weeks, it has consumed more than fourteen hours of PBS programming—in both G-rated versions and with a few curse words left in—and has generated discussions, promos, localized versions, web material, a coffee-table book and who knows what else. Burns has said that he devoted six years and untold millions to this story because he hears that students think we fought with Germany against Russia and because the World War II veterans who could tell the story were dying off at such a rate that it had to be done now or not at all.

Whether it should have been done at all is a more complicated question. Of course, all people of good will support a focus on history in our public discourse; and though he has no professional academic training and decided to include no military experts or historians in his Greek chorus, Burns is a reasonably reliable narrator. His team, moreover, scouted out previously unseen footage of the war that is largely compelling and occasionally riveting. But because Burns is unwilling to advance any overall argument, or even contextualize his rich material within the many historical disputes that continue to swirl around these events, he essentially passes up a unique opportunity to help Americans understand the complexity that accompanies even a "good" war fought by a "greatest generation." Watching these programs, you'd be hard pressed to make a judgment on whether it was necessary to drop the atom bomb, or even firebomb Tokyo and Dresden. Whether the deals FDR cut at Yalta were heroic, a sellout, neither or both, well, Burns doesn't say.

Again, this would all be unremarkable were it not for the fact that Burns has somehow been designated America's official historian. (It is fitting that in this country, our historian makes TV shows instead of writing books.) This means that tens of millions of dollars dedicated to educating this nation about its own history are sucked into the vortex of his fundraising machine. Employing a romantic Wynton Marsalis score alongside historically insupportable, showbiz-style assertions such as "Nothing anywhere would ever be the same," Burns clearly considers it his mandate to engage as much in mythmaking as in documentation and disquisition. Because of this, though I am usually unsympathetic to any form of political pressure on scholars or artists, regardless of funding sources, when Hispanic leaders called for protest marches and Congressional pressure to get Latinos included in Burns's program, I felt they had a point. Burns initially resisted, insisting that re-editing the film would be "destructive, like trying to graft an arm onto your child." But with so much corporate good will and PBS funding riding on the program, he was moved to change his mind. As *The New Yorker*'s Nancy Franklin pointed out, "It turns out that not reëditing the film was also like grafting an arm onto your child." And so Burns, whose PBS contract runs through 2022, tacked on about a half-hour of Hispanic history.

What I found most salutary about *The War* was not the program itself but the vivacious and intelligent discussion it has inspired. The *New York Times*'s Alessandra Stanley offered up a little gem of an essay in which she noted that because "public television is too often in a defensive crouch, fending off attacks by right-wing groups that accuse it of liberal bias," its programmers have developed a degree of "insecurity [that] has perhaps driven PBS to underestimate its audience's appetite for widened horizons." This is a simple truth, albeit one rarely stated so matter-of-factly in the mainstream media, which perpetuate the opposite stereotype. Stanley also compares Burns's US-centric interpretation of the war with PBS's 1974 broadcast of the twenty-six-episode, British-made *The World at War*. Told from a British point of view but including German, Japanese and American witnesses and respectful of the controversies that continue to preoccupy historians today, the documentary included interviews with controversial historical players like Alger Hiss, who attended Yalta with FDR, and Paul Tibbets, an Enola Gay pilot. "Networks give viewers the stories they want to see," Stanley concluded. "The mission of public television is also to provide the history people ought to know."

In *Newsweek*, David Gates noted that Burns took pains to prevent *The War* from serving as jingoistic propaganda. "I hope it makes people ask questions about war, and make sure that our governments fight only necessary wars. They'll have to make their own decisions about which those are," Burns explained. But Gates observes that "Burns may be overestimating the capacities of a populace so unacquainted with its own history, so accustomed to being spun—in plain English, lied to—and so conditioned by the disposability of all 'content,' from popular music to movies to celebrities to events in the news, that facts go in one ear and out the other."

But such excellent commentaries do make one regret that this type of discussion occurs so rarely, and that it takes a Ken Burns extravaganza—one that has been denuded of almost all point of view save its misplaced emphasis on the specialness of all things American—to inspire it. Newspapers and newsmagazines are decimating their books pages, where most mass cultural commentary and debate take place. Cable TV and talk-radio are an ever more polluted cesspool of conservative bile and tabloid trash. There are exceptions, and the blogosphere is picking up some of the slack, but American public discourse in an increasingly bookless universe is fast becoming the wasteland that so many have long feared. If our society cared about its future as well as its past, instead of the Limbaughs, O'Reillys and Hannitys poisoning the airwaves, we'd have many more Ken Burnses expressing a multiplicity of viewpoints. ■

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Rudy's Dirty Money

Candidate Giuliani has tapped into the Bush family's Texas connections and Big Oil billionaires in his quest for the presidency.

by ARI BERMAN

In March 2001, as Dick Cheney assembled his secret energy task force, Haley Barbour, one of the most powerful Republican lobbyists in Washington and a former chair of the Republican National Committee, fired off a memo to the Vice President. "A moment of truth is arriving," Barbour wrote, "in the form of a decision whether this Administration's policy will be to regulate and/or tax CO_2 as a pollutant." Barbour pointedly asked, "Do environmental initiatives, which would greatly exacerbate the energy problems, trump good energy policy, which the country has lacked for eight years?"

The memo bore the imprimatur of Barbour's lobbying firm, but the real work was being done by Bracewell & Patterson, a midsize Texas law firm with a client list as long as the plume from a smokestack. Bracewell would go on to become one of the key lobbying outfits on energy policy in the Bush II era. Its clients have included massive coal-burning power plants like the Atlanta-based Southern Company; more than 450 oil companies represented by the National Petrochemical and Refiners Association; and Texas heavy hitters like Enron, ChevronTexaco and Valero Energy. All these interests had a major stake in persuading George W. Bush to abandon his campaign pledge to regulate carbon dioxide, the leading source of greenhouse-gas emissions. Two weeks after receiving Barbour's memo, Bush reversed his position and decided against naming CO_2 as a pollutant, leading to more than six years of inaction in combating global warming.

It was the first of many victories for Bracewell & Patterson. In the coming years the firm would persuade the Administration to exempt coal-burning power plants from new pollution controls, forestall plans to reduce mercury emissions and shield the makers of MTBE, a toxic gasoline additive that contaminates drinking water, from costly lawsuits.

In March 2005 Bracewell got its biggest boost yet. At a press conference at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City, the firm unveiled a new partner: former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. It also unveiled a new name: Bracewell & Giuliani. It was a huge coup for the firm. "He's going to help expand Bracewell's reputation nationally and internationally," Bracewell lobbyist Scott Segal said at the time.

It was also a shrewd move for "America's mayor." Giuliani had already enjoyed a string of business successes following his term as mayor. He had launched the consulting firm Giuliani Partners shortly after 9/11, and he'd partnered with Ernst & Young to launch an investment bank, Giuliani Capital Advisors, which was sold in March to an Australian company for an undisclosed sum. Giuliani jet-setted around the globe in a Gulfstream, giving speeches at $100,000 a pop. His 2002 book *Leadership* sold more than a million copies.

A law firm would solidify Rudy's financial empire—but not just any firm would do. Partner Giuliani wanted to become President Giuliani. He needed money and, more important, political connections. Bracewell offered a gateway into the lavish world of Texas Republican fundraising and easy access to the same titans of industry who had helped make the Bush family rich and propelled W. into the White House. The former mayor of one of the bluest cities in the country had just inked a whole lot of red.

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THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Katrina vanden Heuvel,
Editor & Publisher
of *The Nation*

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Strike Force for Industry

The arrival of the second Bush Administration and the ascent of Bracewell went hand in hand. After persuading the Administration to abandon its CO_2 pledge, Bracewell launched a full-court press on behalf of another industry priority: relaxing restrictions on coal-fired power plants. In 1999 the Clinton Administration had sued nine companies for failing to add new pollution controls when updating or expanding more than fifty of their plants. The companies wanted the EPA rule, known as "new source review," changed and the lawsuits dismissed. Enlisted in the cause were key GOP lobbyists, including Barbour; C. Boyden Gray, White House counsel for Bush Sr.; and Marc Racicot, former governor of Montana, a Bracewell partner who was a top lobbyist for Enron and head of the Republican National Committee.

In May 2001, two weeks before the Administration unveiled its energy plan, Barbour and Racicot met with Cheney and urged him to abandon the Clinton-era rules. Over the intense objections of career EPA attorneys, the Administration decided to torpedo the Clinton lawsuits and granted the power plants the huge loopholes they sought. Senior EPA officials resigned in protest, and fourteen states sued to block the rules changes. Eliot Spitzer, New York Attorney General at the time, accused the Administration of "gutting" the Clean Air Act and "putting the financial interests of the oil, gas and coal companies above the public's right to breathe clean air."

Days after the changes were announced, Ed Krenik, the EPA's chief liaison to Capitol Hill, took a job in Bracewell's Washington office. It was the beginning of an EPA exodus—especially to Bracewell. The EPA's acting general counsel, Lisa Jaeger, joined Bracewell in March 2004, and the agency's top political appointee for clean air, Jeffrey Holmstead, was hired last October. These hires solidified Bracewell's reputation as a "strike force for industry," says Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch.

By the time Giuliani joined Bracewell in 2005, the firm was regarded as "the most well-known face of aggressive energy-industry lobbying in DC," says John Walke, head of the clean air division at the Natural Resources Defense Council. The DC contingent has done little to tone down its advocacy since Rudy's arrival. In the wake of record oil industry profits, they lobbied against a tax on windfall revenue. At a recent EPA hearing in Philadelphia, physicians, state officials, environmentalists and even an asthmatic family testified about the need to reduce smog levels. But Holmstead, now Bracewell's star expert, brushed aside such concerns. "If you change the standard, it's not going to have any impact whatsoever," he said.

Rudy didn't come cheap. Bracewell paid Giuliani Partners $10 million for his services and Giuliani a base salary of $1 million a year, plus 7.5 percent of the firm's New York revenues. (Former New York City Mayor Ed Koch once said, "You can get rich, or you can get elected." Giuliani is trying to do both.) In return, Rudy performed a variety of tasks. He spearheaded the opening of the New York office, bringing over talent like Michael Hess, New York City's chief lawyer under Giuliani, and Marc Mukasey, the son of US Attorney General–designate Michael Mukasey, to head the firm's white-collar defense practice. In more than two years, the firm has grown to roughly forty lawyers, with annual revenues estimated at $27 million.

Giuliani says he's never lobbied in Washington. But he has helped in other ways. He traveled to London to meet with executives from Shell Oil. He recruits new associates. As of last year he worked on "three or four cases" a year, he told Bloomberg News.

Rudy was once widely considered one of the premier lawyers in the country. He was the youngest associate attorney general ever, under Ronald Reagan, and as district attorney in Manhattan he made a name for himself by prosecuting crooked congressmen, Wall Street schemers and mob leaders. Yet he's always had trouble balancing his law career with his politics. In 1989 Giuliani joined the New York firm of White & Case. The firm had a list of controversial clients, including the government of Panama, home to drug-dealing dictator Manuel Noriega; foreign banks that gave large loans to the apartheid regime in South Africa; and an Italian construction firm that helped build a chemical weapons plant in Libya.

When Giuliani launched a run for mayor that same year, he was blindsided by bad press. "White & Case represented all sorts of dictators and scumbags," says veteran political consultant Hank Sheinkopf. "Rudy could never understand why that would be a problem." Politicians of both parties called on Giuliani to release his client list. Billionaire businessman Ronald Lauder, who ran against Giuliani in the Republican primary, aired a television ad featuring side-by-side pictures of Giuliani and Noriega. Nelson Warfield, Lauder's spokesman at the time and a current adviser to presidential candidate Fred Thompson, sees parallels between then and now. "It was an issue for him in '89, and it's an issue for him in '07," Warfield says of Rudy's clients. (Thompson, it should be noted, has his own questions to answer about his lengthy career as a Washington lobbyist.)

The Giuliani campaign is anticipating such scrutiny. In a leaked campaign dossier obtained by the New York *Daily News* in January, the word "business" appeared at the top of a list of potential vulnerabilities, ahead of his ex-wife Donna Hanover. The concern was justified. After the 2004 election Giuliani saw the nomination for Homeland Security czar of a protégé, former New York City Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, crash and burn when the press uncovered Kerik's affairs, unpaid back taxes and ties to the mob. "Rudy will be held to a higher standard," predicts GOP strategist Tony Fabrizio. "This is stuff he did *after* becoming America's mayor."

Bracewell & Giuliani presents a host of potential sore spots, on the left and the right. Operatives from rival GOP campaigns were quick to exploit the fact that the firm represented Citgo, the state oil company of Venezuela, one of the current bêtes noires of the right wing. Bracewell helped Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. block "indecency" laws on television, thwarting a pet issue of Christian conservatives. The firm provided counsel to the defense fund of disgraced former House majority leader Tom DeLay—at the same time

Ari Berman is a Nation *contributing writer. Research support was provided by the Puffin Foundation Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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that it was lobbying DeLay and Congress to grant immunity to the makers of the toxic gasoline additive MTBE, which faces hundreds of lawsuits for contaminating drinking water. Clients abroad have included repressive regimes such as Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan (Bracewell has two offices representing American oil companies in Kazakhstan; Rudy's Bracewell supporters recently held a campaign fundraiser there). A few years ago its biggest client was Enron.

Giuliani has accepted more money from the energy industry—$477,208 through the first half of 2007—than any other presidential candidate. These ties likely won't hurt him with GOP primary voters, who welcomed Bush and Cheney with open arms. But it could arouse the suspicions of moderate and independent voters in a general election, many of whom don't look forward to the idea of Halliburton clones dictating policy in the next White House.

Giuliani has struck a gold mine through his connections at the Bracewell law firm, where he's recruited many of Bush's billionaire buddies.

Texas Loves Rudy

After joining Bracewell, Giuliani became a frequent visitor to Texas. He's raised nearly $4 million in the state, more than any other Republican, and as of August recruited thirty-seven of George W. Bush's Pioneers and Rangers (those who raised at least $100,000 and $200,000, respectively, for the Bush campaigns), second only to John McCain. Rudy became acquainted with Texas politics when he launched his aborted senatorial run against Hillary Clinton in 2000. Roy Bailey, a Dallas insurance mogul and former finance chair of the Texas Republican Party, helped him raise money for that race. They struck up a close friendship, and after 9/11 Giuliani told *The American Lawyer* magazine he "turned over" his postmayoral planning to Bailey, who became managing director of Giuliani Partners. At the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City, where Rudy's invocation of 9/11 took center stage, Bailey met Pat Oxford, managing partner of Bracewell & Patterson. Over coffee the next day, Bailey floated the idea of Giuliani joining Bracewell. They clicked, and soon the deal was done.

Oxford himself is a player in Texas Republican politics. He met George W. Bush in the 1970s, worked on his campaigns and became a Pioneer in 2000 for Bush/Cheney. Through Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, a law school classmate, Oxford met Karl Rove; they became "fast friends," Oxford told *The American Lawyer*. In 2000 Oxford formed the Mighty Texas Strike Force, dispatching volunteers from Texas to battleground states. During the 2000 recount in Florida, Oxford said he "ran Broward County" and managed the Bush/Cheney legal defense team, talking with Bush frequently in Texas. In 2004 his twenty-five-person "strike force" in Ohio became a source of contention when hotel workers in Columbus, according to a report compiled by the Democratic staff of the House Judiciary Committee, claimed that the strike team used "payphones to make intimidating calls to likely voters, targeting people recently in the prison system" and alleging that the FBI would send them back to jail if they voted.

Giuliani's business partners and Texas allies have come to play a prominent role in his presidential campaign. Oxford is the campaign's national chairman, marshaling operations and squiring Giuliani throughout the state. A fellow Houstonian, Jim Lee, a close ally of Governor Rick Perry and a Pioneer for Bush/Cheney in '04, is the campaign's new finance chief. The day-trading company Lee co-founded, Momentum Securities, was censured and fined $75,000 by the National Association of Security Dealers in 2001 for producing misleading advertising material, downplaying financial risks to investors and overstating its capital. After Lee raised $200,000 for Perry's re-election campaign, the governor appointed him last year to the board overseeing Texas's $96 billion public school employee pension fund.

Giuliani Partners's Roy Bailey introduced the candidate to GOP billionaires and major Bush supporters like T. Boone Pickens and Tom Hicks. Pickens got to know Rudy after dinner one night at Bailey's house. Hicks had committed to McCain's campaign, but after Bailey "went to see him and rib him about it," he changed his mind and became Giuliani's Texas chairman. The three hosted a fundraiser for Rudy last March in Dallas.

Pickens is a legendary corporate raider from West Texas who terrorized Wall Street by threatening to take over oil companies and grew filthy rich in the process. Since launching a hedge fund specializing in energy investments in 1996, Pickens has become even richer, making more than $1.5 billion in 2005. That same year he gave $165 million to Cowboy Golf, a small charity connected to his alma mater, Oklahoma State, and on whose board Pickens sits. Within an hour, the tax-deductible donation was invested back into the Pickens hedge fund, BP Capital. Critics who objected to the transaction, and Pickens's influence at OSU, began calling the school "Boone State."

More recently, Pickens has been prospecting in Texas's new oil: water. His company, Mesa Water, owns groundwater rights to 200,000 acres of land north of Amarillo (in Texas, unlike other Western states, groundwater is considered private by virtue of a "right to capture" law), which he's said he plans to sell to cities like El Paso, San Antonio and Dallas, potentially netting him $1 billion over the next thirty years. Pickens claims to be the "number-one steward of the land," but locals are wary of what *Fortune* magazine dubbed a *Chinatown*-esque scheme to divert water from the Panhandle, earning Pickens the status of "regional reprobate," as *Salon* put it. For a born-and-bred Texan, Pickens is more like Giuliani than you'd think, especially when it comes to his personal life: four wives, semi-estranged from his children, reviled in his hometown. His political profile is no less turbulent. When the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth needed seed money for an ad campaign smearing John Kerry's service record in Vietnam, Pickens ponied up an initial $500,000. He eventually gave $3 million to the group. Pickens has raised more than $500,000 for Giuliani, includ-

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ing $50,000 from employees of his hedge fund.

Tom Hicks isn't far behind Pickens financially, and his ties to the Bush family go even deeper. In 1994 under then-Governor Bush Hicks joined the University of Texas Board of Regents, one of the plushest appointments in the state, and was put in charge of investing the university's multibillion-dollar endowment. Hicks formed a private entity using UT money, called the University of Texas Investment Management Company, which invested millions with Bush family supporters and Hicks allies like The Carlyle Group, Bass Brothers of Fort Worth—who bailed out Bush's previous company, Harken Energy—and Dallas's Wyly family, all major patrons of the Bushes. News reports detailing the close family connections led to a major public controversy. Hicks stepped down at the end of his term, but the ties to Bush didn't end there. In 1998 Hicks bought the Texas Rangers for $250 million, three times what Bush and his partners paid for the team in 1989, and granted Bush six times his original share, making the failed businessman an overnight multimillionaire.

Hicks, who became vice chairman of the radio behemoth Clear Channel in 2000, helped Bush in whatever way he could. According to *Salon*, "Hicks announced on a conference call among Clear Channel's senior radio executives that the company was supporting Bush's presidential run, that everyone was encouraged to make donations, and that the legal department would be in contact with donors in order to maintain a proper roster." After 9/11 Clear Channel banned "potentially offensive" songs from its stations, and in the run-up to the war in Iraq, bankrolled supposedly grassroots pro-war "Rallies for America" across the country. The company gave nearly $470,000 to Republican candidates in 2006, roughly the same as in '04. Ironically, Hicks's investment fund sold its stake in Clear Channel last year to the private equity firm Bain Capital Partners—the longtime employer of Mitt Romney. Today, though, Hicks says, "I'm more closely aligned to Rudy than I am to Bush." As state chair for Giuliani, Hicks was given the task last January, according to the leaked strategy memo, of raising $30 million for the campaign in Texas, a figure that has thus far proven wildly optimistic.

The benefits of Giuliani's association with Bracewell are evident when it comes to hauling in money and supporters. "If people in Texas want a presidential candidate with Texas connections, I think I have the strongest one," he told donors at a private golf club in Dallas in March. "I'm here a lot on business. I've got to know Texas really well." Bracewell gave Giuliani a foothold in Texas that other candidates don't have. "It helped considerably," says Robert Stein, a professor of political science at Rice University in Houston whose daughter recently accepted a job with the firm.

In between stops on the campaign trail, Giuliani always found time to swing by the Houston office. "This summer, it was quite a thing to watch," Stein says. "He was there a lot, to be seen and to create press." At gatherings of prospects whom Bracewell wanted to lure to the firm, Giuliani was a star attraction. "It was as much a fundraising attempt as an

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

- John Muir

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attempt to get people to sign with Bracewell," Stein says. (The Giuliani campaign never responded to repeated requests for interviews with the candidate's business partners and key fundraisers.)

Giuliani was back in Houston in early September, enjoying a Houston Texans football game with Oxford and Texans owner Bob McNair, who in 2004 had given more than $500,000 to the Swift Boat Veterans and another right-wing 527, Progress for America. Rudy had been in Arlington the day before taking batting practice with the Texas Rangers, courtesy of owner Tom Hicks, who was hosting a fundraiser at the park. That night, Hizzoner threw out the first pitch.

On the surface, it's surprising that a thrice-married, pro–gay rights, pro–gun control mayor of New York City could do so well in the Lone Star State. But when you examine Giuliani's record as mayor and his positions on the campaign trail, it begins to make sense. As mayor of New York, Giuliani tried to privatize everything he could, including hospitals, schools and the management of Central Park, while vetoing a living-wage ordinance for city employees.

On the campaign trail in Texas, like everywhere else, he talks largely about 9/11 and "the terrorists' war against us." (His foreign policy advisers include neocon war cheerleaders like Norman Podhoretz and Daniel Pipes.) He has taken a newfound hard line on illegal immigration and the border and frequently professes his love for Ronald Reagan. He talks about the need to further reduce taxes and shrink the government. In an essay on *National Review Online*, Pickens explained his support for Giuliani in part by noting that "Rudy will demand that each Cabinet member submit budget cuts of between 5 and 20 percent annually." When asked at a cocktail party in the Woodlands, a chic suburb of Houston, how he could win the South, Giuliani mentioned his "strong conservative credentials" and his competitiveness in a general election, according to Jim Granato, a professor at the University of Houston who attended the event. "He's the one they think can defeat Hillary," says Stein.

In a state where Republicans remain doggedly fond of their native son, Giuliani rarely, if ever, criticizes President Bush. "Rudy's been alone, among all the candidates, in treating Bush with kid gloves," says Giuliani's former deputy mayor, Fran Reiter. "So gathering Bush's supporters to his campaign makes sense to me."

When it comes to energy policy, Giuliani's record as mayor won't present a roadblock to his industry supporters. He put ten new power plants in New York neighborhoods over the objection of community groups and allowed utility giant Consolidated Edison to expand along the East River. Unlike other New York Republicans, such as former Governor George Pataki, "environmental issues were not a big category for Giuliani," says Reiter.

At a speech last year at the Manhattan Institute, the conservative think tank that generated many of Rudy's mayoral policies, Giuliani called the idea of energy independence "the wrong paradigm." He dismissed energy conservation as "helpful but not really very, very effective." He was most animated, according to press reports, about the need to build new nuclear power plants and expand oil drilling. "We haven't drilled in Alaska," he said. "We haven't built oil refineries. We haven't ordered a nuclear power plant since 1978." He also plugged ethanol, a favorite in Midwest corn states like Iowa, and so-called clean coal technologies.

On the campaign trail, Rudy now includes the requisite language about curbing global warming and weaning America from its dependence on foreign oil. One of his campaign's "twelve commitments" is to "lead America towards energy independence." At a diner in Waterloo, Iowa, this past summer, he was asked how he'd accomplish that goal, given his clients in the oil, gas, coal and nuclear energy industries. "Law firms aren't political," Giuliani responded, "so this is kind of a silly way in which people attack each other on politics. It has no relationships to your political position. As a lawyer, or a law firm…you don't make determinations of who you represent on your political philosophy."

That answer was less than convincing in light of Bracewell's political activism and Giuliani's newfound friends. These days, Rudy's "political philosophy" seems to mirror that of his energy clients and Bush Pioneers. There's synergy between the old Bracewell & Patterson and the new Bracewell & Giuliani. On a recent trip to Mississippi, Giuliani even floated the name of Haley Barbour, now governor of the state, as his potential VP. ■

Rudy's Bird of Prey

When the New York *Daily News* obtained a leaked 140-page strategy memo from the Giuliani campaign in January "one name," according to the article, appeared "throughout the document: Paul Singer, a discreet hedge-fund tycoon who has been described as the Republican George Soros." The Upper East Side billionaire and longtime contributor to Republican and conservative causes was asked by the campaign to raise cash from Wall Street, recruiting other big-money donors and even contacting 9/11 survivors and victims' family members to support Giuliani's bid for the Republican nomination.

Since then, Singer has become one of Giuliani's most important fundraisers, bundling more than $500,000 for the campaign. Singer and employees of his hedge fund, Elliott Associates, have chipped in an additional $168,000. The campaign frequently uses his private jet.

In late September Singer was once again in the news. Republicans in California with ties to the Giuliani campaign were pushing a ballot initiative that would award the state's electoral votes by Congressional district rather than winner-take-all, a move that could potentially throw a close election to a Republican. The group leading the drive was funded via a previously unknown organization in Missouri with exactly one

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By John Fleming

For many of us, nothing is more relaxing than a long, luxurious bath. Unfortunately, because of safety concerns, many people, particularly older people, have to forego this simple pleasure. Sure, you can spend big bucks to remodel your bathroom to provide a bathtub you can use, but who wants to do that? Now there's a better way, and it lets you use the bath that's in your home today.

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donation of $175,000. When that outfit refused to divulge who made the contribution, the two GOP strategists in charge of the initiative quit in frustration. Eventually, as questions mounted, Singer admitted to being the sole contributor but claimed complete independence from the Giuliani campaign. Democratic lawyers in California believed otherwise, so they filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission alleging a Giuliani-connected "money laundering operation."

That Singer was at the center of the controversy should come as no surprise. In the 1990s Singer's hedge fund pioneered a shadowy, lucrative and often ruthless form of investing whose practitioners earned the not-so-generous moniker "vulture funds." Vulture funds—or "sovereign debt investors," as they prefer to call themselves—buy old defaulted debts, usually from the poorest countries in the world, and then drag the debtors into court, seeking a settlement far above what the funds originally paid for the debt. These are debts that are usually forgiven when the countries are granted relief by wealthy nations like the United States and multilateral institutions like the World Bank. An official at the Bank likens vulture fund activities to giving up your seat on a bus for an old lady, only to see a young college jock swipe it.

Large hedge funds like Singer's Elliott Associates often operate in secret, through shell companies in tax shelters like the Cayman Islands. Since the end of 2005, more than a third of the countries receiving debt relief have been targeted by at least thirty-eight hedge funds, which have gotten judgments in excess of $1 billion. This reverse Robin Hood scheme has drawn criticism around the globe, including from Nelson Mandela and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

It all started in 1996, when Elliott paid $11 million for $20 million of debt, dating back to 1983, theoretically owed by the government of Peru. In 1989, then–US Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady had urged rich countries to forgive the debts of poor ones in order to spur economic growth and global development. Instead of settling with Peru, as its 180 other creditors did, Elliott took the government to court. "Pay us in full or be sued," Singer threatened.

A federal district court in New York initially ruled against Elliott, finding that the fund had purchased the debt "with the intent and purpose to sue" and "rejected each and every opportunity to participate in Peru's restructuring." Elliott appealed and won. Then the fund began working the political system in New York. With the help of a lobbying firm in Albany, Elliott, through a subsidiary, persuaded the New York legislature to change an obscure law governing compound interest, increasing Elliott's payout by $16 million, for a total, including interest, of $58 million. It was done so quietly that Peru's lawyers didn't find out until after the fact. A few years later the New York State Assembly eliminated another law that Peru had used to defend itself. Three months after the bill became law, Singer gave the lead sponsor, State Assembly Member Susan John, a $2,500 campaign donation.

Elliott's most recent target is the oil-rich but desperately poor West African nation of Congo, home to three civil wars since 1993, with 70 percent of the population below the poverty line. In the late 1990s Elliott, through a variety of shadowy subsidiaries, bought $100 million of defaulted Congolese debt for roughly 7 to 10 cents on the dollar, according to a legal brief filed by the Congolese government. A Cayman Islands–based entity called Kensington International went to court in London and received favorable judgments, ordering repayment of the debt plus interest. Then Kensington returned to court in London and sought to prevent Congo from repaying any other creditors until Kensington was paid. This time the judge balked, saying he didn't even know what Kensington International was and how much it had paid for the debts.

Only when Kensington sued Congo in New York under a RICO statute (which would triple a final judgment to $375 million), was it revealed that Kensington was a subsidiary of Singer's fund. Since then, Elliott/Kensington has pulled out all the stops. The fund retained as counsel Ted Olson, George W. Bush's initial choice to replace Alberto Gonzales as Attorney General. Kensington has filed at least fifteen separate lawsuits against Congo and its business partners, in places ranging from the British Virgin Islands to Hong Kong to the United States.

After members of the Congolese government amassed large hotel bills at a UN summit in New York, Kensington lobbied the World Bank to block scheduled debt relief for the country, according to two sources close to the Congolese government. The fund placed op-eds in influential newspapers, produced letters of support from members of Congress and even filed a lawsuit in Brussels against the Belgian government to confiscate a 10 million euro foreign aid payment from Belgium to Congo. (In a separate case against Argentina, Elliott has enlisted former top Clinton Administration officials to persuade the country to pay debts that the firm acquired for as little as 15 cents on the dollar.) "They're completely amoral," says David Skeel, a professor of corporate law at the University of Pennsylvania. "It's almost a matter of pride to them."

Elliott says this type of investing accounts for only 1 percent of its $7 billion hedge fund. But Singer is unapologetic about the hardball tactics he pioneered. "Every country has poverty, including the USA," he told *The Nation* via e-mail. "Our disputes have always been with sovereigns who can pay but refuse." He dismisses his critics as "debtors who attempt to curry populist favor by paying just what they feel like paying" and "ideologically driven people and groups who do not realize that capital goes where it is welcome."

Singer has never been shy about expressing his conservative views. He regularly espouses them in Elliott's newsletter to investors, warning against universal healthcare and an equitable tax rate for hedge funds and advocating nuclear power to fight global warming.

This summer, as part of a fundraising shakeup, Giuliani made Singer a senior policy adviser focusing on the Middle East, a plum spot for the billionaire, given his ties to neoconservative outfits like the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. Indeed, in a newsletter last March, Singer added his name to the list of Giuliani advisers who have advocated bombing Iran. "We think that it is necessary to do so," he wrote, "and soon." A.B.

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About Your Professor

Dr. Irwin Weil is a Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at Northwestern University. He earned his B.A. and M.A. at the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. at Harvard University. He is the recipient of the Northwestern University College of Arts and Sciences Award for distinguished teaching and the Gold Pushkin Medal from the International Association of Teachers of Russian and Russian Literature.

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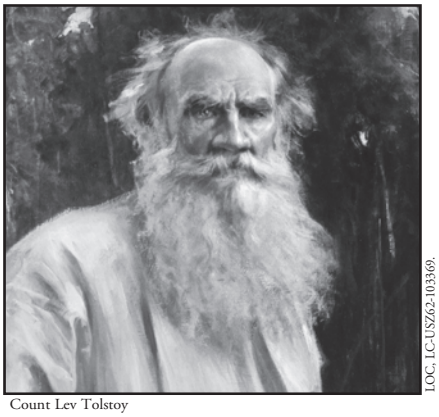

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Turkey's Finest Hour?

The AKP offers more inclusion for the religiously observant, the poor and minorities.

by RICHARD FALK

The decisive victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the July parliamentary elections, followed by the selection of Abdullah Gul as the next president despite harsh objections by the country's powerful military leadership and hard-core supporters of the secularist ideology established by Kemal Ataturk, represents a new phase in the history of modern Turkey. Those opposed to these developments claim that Turkey is drifting dangerously toward Islamist rule. They insist that the government headed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan is following a secret agenda, disguising its true intentions behind a smokescreen of disingenuous endorsements of Turkey's secular tradition.

I share the contrary view, expressed by British Foreign Secretary David Miliband during a recent state visit to Ankara. "Turkey grew stronger in the eyes of the world," he said. Miliband was referring not only to the orderly democratic elections but to the military's willingness to accept a political outcome contrary to its wishes. Its acquiescence was undoubtedly helped by Gul's inaugural speech, which stressed his commitment to secularism as well as his announced intention to respect the traditions of the presidential palace, which means his wife will be excluded from official ceremonies because she wears a headscarf. As a bright young Turkish journalist, Mustafa Akyol, observed, Gul's presidency "signals not an 'end to secularism'… but a bolstering of our democracy." Gul's recently announced support for repeal of Article 301 of the Turkish penal code, used to prosecute writers and journalists for "insulting Turkishness," is a further encouraging straw in the wind.

This smooth transition to unchallenged AKP leadership was greatly aided by the support of the business community, as well as by the party's grassroots popularity. Clearly, voters were not convinced by the military's pre-election warnings. Public support stemmed from two achievements during the first phase of the Erdogan leadership: the success of market-friendly reforms in achieving high economic growth rates and Turkish successes in the world economy of a sort that had eluded prior governments; and a government outlook that was comparatively free from corruption and was seen to be genuinely committed to addressing the concerns of the poor, who make up a large percentage of the citizenry. It is a rare achievement in any country for a government to please its business and financial community and also to win over the poor. This double achievement goes a long way toward explaining the AKP's electoral vindication and the passivity of the army and embittered secularists, whose traditional power seems to be slipping away. Put differently, if the economy had been stagnant, the business leadership restive and the grassroots disappointed, then the election results would likely have been far less supportive of the AKP, and the military would not have been nearly as likely to accept AKP initiatives of which it disapproved.

REUTERS/UMIT BEKTAS

Turkish President Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan in September

In many respects the political struggle is misperceived as one of secularism versus religion. This misperception was illustrated by a pre-election cover of *Time* portraying a young woman wearing a headscarf, which supposedly expressed what was at stake in the elections. A more accurate understanding would have regarded the elections as a clash between two kinds of secularism and two kinds of democracy. The AKP offers Turkey more inclusion for major groups previously neglected, oppressed or victimized by discrimination: the religiously observant, the poor and minorities (especially the Kurds).

This greater inclusiveness is also consistent with the AKP's effort to gain Turkish membership in the European Union. Those who suspect the motives of the AKP claim that this widening of democracy is just window-dressing to win approval at home or a clever way of keeping the army in the barracks because of the European pressures on Turkey to demonstrate that the control of its government is finally now firmly in the hands of the elected civilian leadership. Such skepticism seems unfounded in view of the consistency with which the AKP has pursued these goals, as well as its pragmatic style. The party seems well aware of the dangers of pushing too hard against the red lines of secularism as guarded by the military. The military may have allowed the election results, but it has not at all relinquished its self-proclaimed role as guarantor of Kemal Ataturk's conception of government.

Many in Turkey worry that the military, eager to demonstrate its continued hold on power, will stage dangerously disruptive cross-border operations against the country's Kurdish guerrillas based in northern Iraq, and that the AKP govern-

Richard Falk is professor emeritus of international law and practice at Princeton University. His latest book is The Costs of War: International Law, the UN, and World Order After Iraq.

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ment, whatever its views, would be supportive. Indeed, this month Prime Minister Erdogan announced that he would submit plans to Parliament authorizing an invasion.

The religious card is also being played by the old secular elite in a somewhat desperate effort to reverse their displacement. There are some genuine fears on the part of modern sectors of Turkish society, who worry that their freedoms are being compromised by a social climate so supportive of Islam. In more sophisticated circles, this is really a fear of what might be called "societal Islam" rather than "political Islam." The difference here is important, although difficult to pin down. Societal Islam refers to societal practices, including the increasing number of young women wearing headscarves, as well as to the establishment of hotels and restaurants that cater to patrons who adhere to strict Islamic rules prohibiting alcohol and unclothed bathing. I heard many secular friends in Istanbul, who were not particularly political, complain that this made them uncomfortable.

Such concerns are not unwarranted, but to address them through regulations would be impractical, and it would go against any reasonable interpretation of freedom of religion. It also overlooks the far greater degree to which the religiously observant have borne the burdens of the exclusivist, almost militant secularism that dominated Turkey for so long. This discomfort includes outright discrimination that has prevented women wearing headscarves from enjoying the benefits of public education or pursuing a variety of careers. But it has also involved bias of the sort that makes those wearing headscarves feel unwelcome in many public spaces and at cultural events. The most extreme secular objectors to societal Islam are quite prepared to sacrifice democracy, if necessary, to re-establish the social atmosphere that existed in pre-AKP Turkey.

Not surprisingly, those threatened by societal Islam are also fearful of political Islam. Such opponents of the AKP, found especially among supporters of the old, nominally socialist Republican People's Party, seem to believe that the Erdogan/Gul leadership intends at an opportune moment to introduce Sharia law and move Turkey toward the sort of theocratic state that exists in Iran, or at least in the direction of Malaysia, where the state is intolerant toward nonobservant Muslims, punishing failures to fast during Ramadan and denying Muslims access to Malaysian casinos. These critics distrust everything about the AKP, contending that its commitment to democracy is purely tactical, nothing more than "a bus we can ride until we reach our station." In my view these anxieties border on paranoia, but they also reflect a rather cynical effort by displaced secularists to scare the masses and pave the way for a return to power by nondemocratic means. The AKP leadership is too moderate and realistic to embrace political Islam, although among the party faithful, a small minority undoubtedly favor such goals.

There are good reasons to view Turkey as one of the bright spots on the horizon of Middle East politics. Yet it would be a mistake to minimize its problems. Turkish society is harmed by cleavages between the old secular establishment and the new AKP elite, leading to misunderstandings and deep distrust. It will be important to build social bridges as well as governmental links to produce sustainable democracy. Beyond this, relations with the Kurdish minority, some 20 percent of a population of

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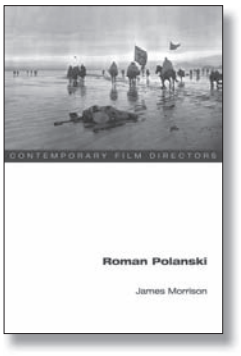

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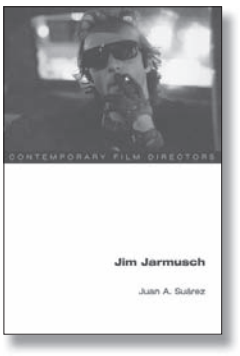

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more than 70 million, raise questions about the scope of Turkish democracy. The AKP has done better than its predecessors in giving hope to moderate Kurdish aspirations, but the party must still find a path to sufficient autonomy, so Kurds do not feel victimized and dependent on a secessionist solution.

On an international level, neither the Turkish government nor the people seem ready to tackle the Armenian problem in a constructive spirit. Decades of educational brainwashing have left all sectors of Turkish society extremely defensive about facing up to the genocide against Armenians carried out during World War I; for the rather substantial far right, the refusal to admit responsibility is a life-or-death issue. Also the long-simmering dispute over the governance of Cyprus is seemingly intractable and obstructs Turkey's efforts to join the EU. Here, though, the Turkish side has done its best to resolve the conflict. Ankara and Turkish Cyprus agreed to accept the very balanced Annan Plan developed under UN auspices, but it was rejected by the Greek side.

A big challenge and opportunity for the AKP is building a consensus in support of a more liberal Constitution. Turkey continues to operate under the 1982 Constitution imposed on the country by the military, which is definitely inconsistent with the ideals of a modern liberal democracy, especially insofar as the military is explicitly given extraordinary privileges, including exemptions from legal accountability. Encouragingly, a draft of a more progressive Constitution has been prepared under the direction of an academic commission headed by an internationally respected expert, Ergun Ozbudun.

There are some dark clouds hovering over Turkey's future, but there are also bright patches of sky. If Turkey can continue to maintain a robust economy and reduce the plight of the poor, it will likely enjoy a period of stability and emerge as a positive, and possibly inspirational, example of a secular democracy sinking its roots deep into an Islamic society. But it is highly implausible that Turkey will serve as a model of moderate Islamic governance. This will not happen, because the AKP is genuinely secular, although in a post-Kemalist spirit, and anyway the military would intervene long before any government in Ankara were to embody an Islamic identity. There are other uncertainties, including the continuing struggle with the Kurdish guerrillas, strategic relations with the United States and Israel and the backlash that might follow from an EU rejection of the Turkish application for membership. Despite this array of potential problems, there is a fair chance that Turkey will turn out to be the only success story in the region, with respect to democracy, human rights and economic development. This favorable outlook would be enhanced by encouragement from Washington and the EU. These developments in Turkey deserve our attention, both for their promise and their possible peril. ■

Taking Celebrity Seriously

Progressives live in a society where fantasy, spectacle and Paris rule. So how do we win?

by STEPHEN DUNCOMBE

Like most people, I know too much about celebrities. Take Paris Hilton, for example. I know about the parties she goes to and the events she attends. I know she has a Chihuahua named Tinkerbell and doesn't wear underwear out on the town. I know this summer she was sent to jail for repeated traffic violations, let out after a few days, then ordered back to her cell, where she claims to have found God and, improbably, a social conscience. Why do we know so much about people like Paris? She is, in historian Daniel Boorstin's deft description of celebrity, famous only for being famous. Given this, why should we care?

It's because we know that we need to care. This celebration of ersatz aristocracy, as paradoxical as it sounds, is genuinely popular culture. *People* is the most profitable magazine in the United States, and E! (the CNN of celebrity gossip) reaches more than 89 million homes. If progressives want their politics to appeal to a majority of the population—which they should in a democracy—they ignore or misunderstand the popularity of celebrity at their peril. What would it mean to create a politics that speak to this fascination? Instead of bemoaning the narcissism of young people who spend hours managing their public selves on Facebook, we need to see it for what it is: the desire to be someone in our mediated age. This popular desire for recognition demands a change in the way progressives do politics.

TOP: REUTERS/DANI CARDONA; LEFT AND RIGHT: REUTERS/CHIP EAST

Traditionally, the left has had a schizophrenic relationship with celebrity. On one side is condemnation: the attention lavished on celebrities is at best a waste of time; at worst, it's

Stephen Duncombe, the author, most recently, of Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy *(New Press), teaches at the Gallatin School of New York University.*

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a dangerous distraction from more important issues. In 1927 Walter Lippmann worried openly in the pages of *Vanity Fair* that America's obsession with celebrity was having a deleterious effect on our politics. "It's no use trying to tell the public about the Mississippi flood," Lippmann complained, "when [celebrity murderer] Ruth Snyder is on the witness stand." The result of this "blazing publicity," Lippmann feared, is a public that knows a lot about nothing and little about what they should.

The flip side of this censure is adulation. Whether it's Angelina Jolie in Africa or Bono drawing attention to global poverty, progressives get giddy when a celebrity shares his or her spotlight with a liberal cause. This response runs deeper than rational appreciation for the media attention these causes are receiving; it's a sign of affirmation: left politics deigned legitimate by our modern gods.

Both condemnation and celebration are politically problematic. They both buy into the central premise of celebrity, that the public exists only as an audience. The stars act while we watch and worship. Recently, however, a new wave of celebrity-savvy activists have been figuring out ways to act upon our desire to watch, tapping into the popular passion for celebrity to open up conversations on progressive causes.

One of these activists is Han Shan, chair of the leadership council of Students for a Free Tibet (SFT). The campaign to end the Chinese occupation of Tibet, probably more than any other movement, has consciously cultivated its relationship with celebrities. Richard Gere, the Beastie Boys and Sharon Stone have all spoken out forcefully, if not always eloquently, about the state of religious and political freedoms in Tibet. A seasoned activist who previously worked with the direct-action training group the Ruckus Society, Shan understands the benefits of linking causes to celebrities. "It's all about profile," he explains, and "celebrities have cachet." "It's assumed," he continues, "that if a celebrity backs your cause, then immediately the public and the media and even policy-makers will sit up and pay attention." This does happen, and the Free Tibet movement is a successful example of this strategy. But, explains the organizer, there's a downside.

Identifying a cause with celebrities can result in a serious issue being dismissed as Hollywood's fad of the day, and a politically clueless celebrity spokesperson can cost credibility (Sharon Stone's name elicits a groan from the SFT activist). But most important, Shan says, "people end up pouring inordinate amounts of resources into securing support of celebrities, rather than doing the real work that would actually advance the cause," like building contacts with reporters and politicians and doing grassroots organizing. Celebrity becomes a sort of magic bullet.

Nonetheless, Shan does see one enduring benefit of aligning a political movement with celebrities and pop culture: it offers what he calls a "stepping stone activist experience." A person may show up at a rally because the Beastie Boys are playing, but she or he just might stay to make calls and stuff envelopes. Celebrity, Shan laughs, is "a gateway drug, of the best kind."

It's exactly this sort of gateway that longtime activist Patricia Jerido is trying to build with her progressive networking site, GoLeft.org. Prominently featured on its home page this summer was a curated list of news stories, briefs about an action staged by the NAACP in Detroit, another Republican politician denouncing the war and…Paris Hilton's jail stint. When I ask, why Paris? Jerido responds, "Because that's what people are talking about.

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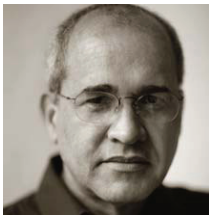

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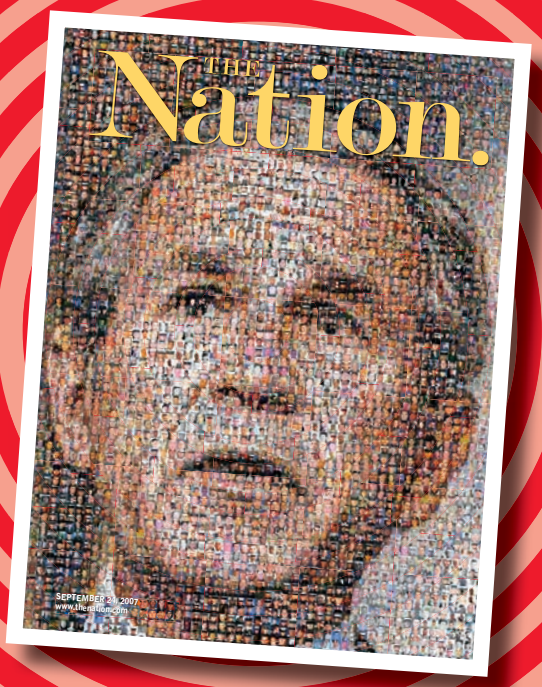

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Republican defections make the news, but Paris in jail makes it into popular culture."

"We need to be talking about her too," the founder of GoLeft elaborates, "using her as a starting point to move to the conversation we want to be having about who gets sent to prison and who gets out, about money, wealth and access." Carmen Van Kerckhove, who runs the website Racialicious.com, calls this sort of thing a "teachable moment"—an approachable opening into larger, thornier issues like the inequities of the criminal justice system. In fact, Van Kerckhove points out, two such moments are opened up when politics and celebrity intersect. The first is the issue itself, and the second is how the mass media handle that issue. Both can be opportunities for political conversation.

By paying close attention to pop culture, GoLeft's Jerido explains, "I can get language or a line to use that I ordinarily wouldn't think of using...it broadens my thinking on how to talk to people." For example, "when Paris was first released after serving only a few days there was a lot of conversation about the unfairness of it all, and that's something we can use as progressives—it becomes a very effective language for framing how we do prison work." Activists frequently speak their own distinct and sometimes off-putting dialect, full of esoteric acronyms and political assumptions. Like it or not, in our highly individualized, broadly dispersed and multicultural society, celebrity is our lingua franca; everyone knows Paris.

Understanding celebrity means looking beyond the stars themselves and questioning why we are so fascinated with them. One answer immediately comes to mind: they have what we don't and wish we did. Celebrities have money and beauty, but they also possess something far more important: recognition. People see them, listen to them, know about them. In psychoanalytic cant, the public's fascination with celebrity is the sublimation of our own desire to be recognized.

In present-day politics citizens are barely noticed. We're recognized only, and briefly, as a vote or campaign contribution. From parties to advocacy groups, politics has increasingly become the business of professionals. This is the "downsizing of democracy," as political scientists Matthew Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg call it. People crave recognition—if they don't find it in their lives they'll find it vicariously through the stars. Progressives need to tap into this desire, "upsizing" democracy by creating political organizations where popular participation is recognized and publicized. And by spotlighting the contributions of everyday citizens, we might, just might, be able to turn the public's attention away from celebrities and nudge it back to where it belongs: the people themselves.

The Huffington Post recently began to include celebrity news feeds from *People* and *US Weekly*, alongside its political news and blogs. Some progressives may roll their eyes at such frivolity, but taking celebrity seriously is merely applying the first rule of guerrilla warfare: know the terrain and use it to your advantage. The topography on which we fight today is the ephemeral ground of fantasy, desire and spectacle. To wish it were different is not an option; to learn how to use it is a political necessity. ■

Letters, continued

(from page 2)

War II that might be useful. There was a little rhyme that appeared on posters and walls:

Use it up.
Wear it out.
Make it do,
Or do without.

This is an excellent counter to Bush's "shop till you drop" to foil the terrorists.

Edward G. Robles

The Localvores Are Coming!

Moab, Utah

Like Christopher Ketcham in "The Hundred-Mile Diet" [Sept. 10/17], I believe that buying regional food—and other products—is the right thing to do. Also like Ketcham, I have two homes: the Moab house I lease to a family and the apartment I rent in England while on a two-year project. I use public transit or walk 90 percent of the time, conserve energy and pay to offset the emissions from my flights, homes and used car. But I'm still using double the resources necessary for one person—far more if you consider that in much of the world, a family of eight could live in my modest three-bedroom house. And they'd be farming the twenty-foot piece of land around my house rather than complaining about lawncare.

I'm not ready to give up traveling to plant community crops, but I agree that a mix of solutions can make a dent in our impact on the environment and keep us from overtaxing the regions that are capable of feeding us year-round.

Lisa Taylor

Not Antiwar, Just Anti–Iraq War

Indianapolis

Phyllis Bennis twice cites the figure that 70 percent of the American public is antiwar ["Letters," Sept. 10/17]. While that statistic may be true vis-à-vis the war on Iraq, I believe Scott Ritter's assessment is more accurate: the American public isn't antiwar per se; it's against this particular war because we're losing it.

Unfortunately, *Nation* readers and our fellow travelers who are against the war on Iraq (and Afghanistan) because it is illegal and immoral are a small minority. Otherwise, there would be more people in the streets, a loud clamor for impeachment hearings, significant opposition to a strike against Iran, and the Democrats in Congress would feel more heat to bring the troops home now.

David Wormser

Rx for the Ills of Journalism

Columbia, Mo.

The ills of journalism so eloquently summarized by Eric Alterman ["The Liberal Media," Sept. 10/17] are the reason that faculty at the Missouri School of Journalism have published *What Good Is Journalism*, a book intended to demonstrate how central good journalism is to the health of democracy.

A national survey conducted for the book and reported in Chapter One shows that consumers of journalism see its flaws but recognize its value in their lives. Other chapters trace the rise of NPR, show how a local newspaper builds community, explain how Washington reporting benefits citizens, describe the benefits to society of investigative reporting, introduce journalist heroes in emerging democracies and tell how to push for higher quality journalism.

George Kennedy
Missouri School of Journalism

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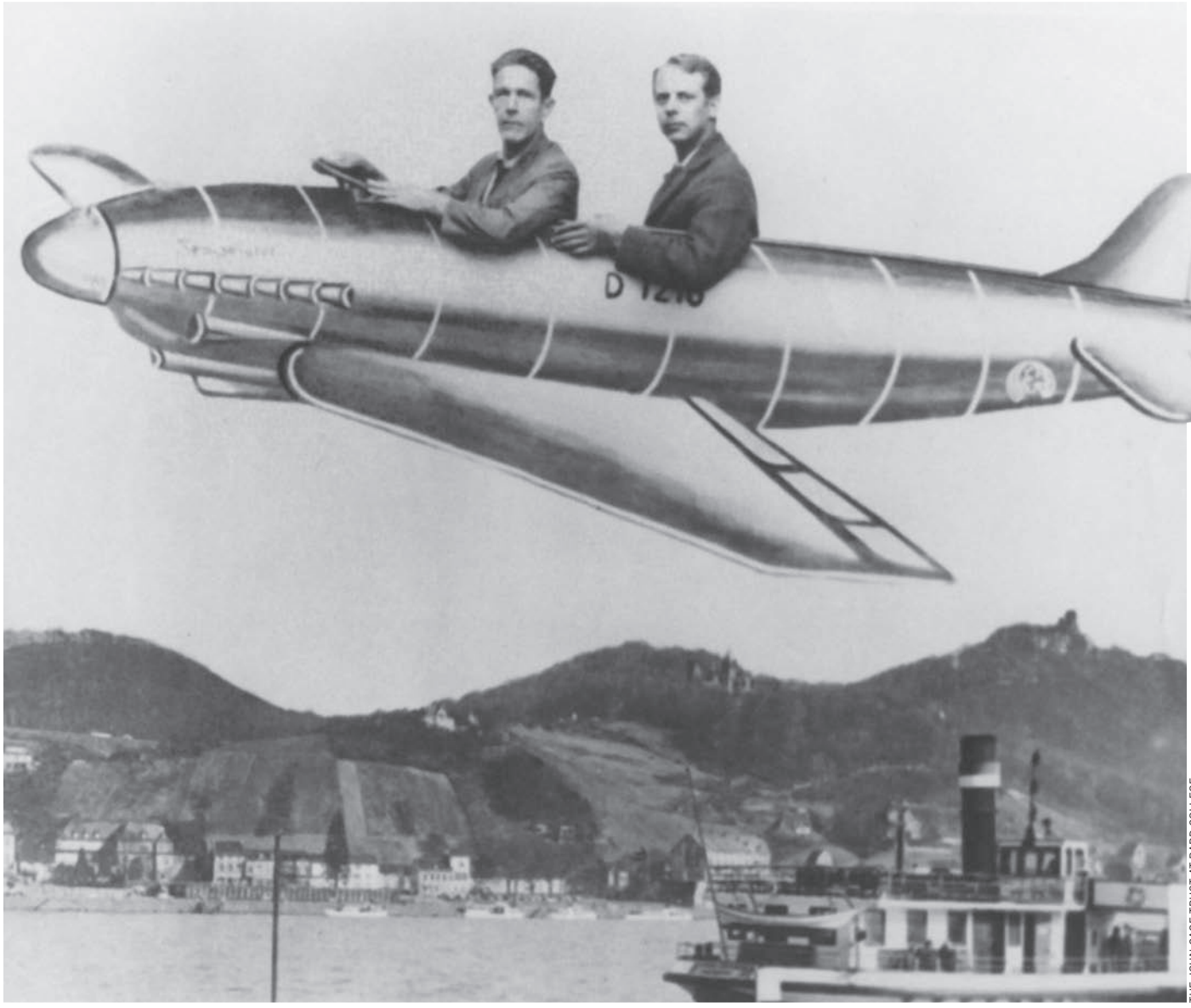
Books & the Arts.



THE JOHN CAGE TRUST AT BARD COLLEGE

John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen take an imaginary flight.

Sound Check

by DAVID SCHIFF

The judgments that shape our view of music history can be volatile and cruel. As Ned Rorem once pointed out, the day after Béla Bartók died he suddenly appeared to be the greatest composer of the century, but the day after Paul Hindemith passed away people had already forgotten who he was. Other composers who once loomed large in books on twentieth-century music, such as Roy Harris and Darius Milhaud, are now remembered, if at all, for a single piece from a large *oeuvre*.

Hasn't it always been so? Perhaps for nothing other than convenience we have reduced the rich musical culture of modern Europe to a mere handful of names. But today there is a bigger temptation: to treat the entire movement of modern concert music as a mistake. Even major reputations seem uncertain. Eighty years after its composition, audiences still find Arnold Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra*, a self-conscious magnum opus, to be as charming as an industrial park; fifty years after its creation, Stravinsky's *Threni*, similarly

David Schiff, a professor of music at Reed College, is the composer of the opera Gimpel the Fool *and author of books on the music of Elliott Carter and George Gershwin.*

The Rest Is Noise

Listening to the Twentieth Century.
By Alex Ross.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 624 pp. $30.

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monumental, languishes unperformed and barely remembered. And worse, recent musicological research has emphasized that composers once portrayed as heroes were skirt-chasers, boy-chasers, alcoholics, anti-Semites, homophobes, crass opportunists and political dupes, among other things.

Such tangled lives and mangled creations are the subject of *The Rest Is Noise*, an engaging new book by *The New Yorker*'s classical music critic, Alex Ross. Who would have thought that a 600-page history of music that few people love could be such a page turner? The book's strongest section is a bleak, unsparing account of composers all too easily compromised by Nazi Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union and the cold war. During three low, dishonest decades, Ross claims, backed with plenty of evidence, music lost its moral authority. Yet I wonder if the question that haunts twentieth-century classical composition is not the loss of moral authority—in Nazi Germany philosophy, physics and medicine lost any claim to it as well—but the loss of musical authority. Ross subtitles his book "Listening to the Twentieth Century," but somehow he does not hear the sounds of Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Bing Crosby, Benny Goodman, Frank Loesser—well, it's a long list. Are they just the noise to Ross's ear?

Indeed, Ross's title encapsulates, perhaps ironically, the arrogant belief of the classical music world that anything beyond its shrinking borders, whether jazz or rap or the sounds of the city, is nonmusic, nonart or at least noncomposition. The grand irony of the book is that so many extraordinarily talented composers produced a body of music that is still Greek, if not noise, to most listeners, even after a century of exposure. Yet the book is most persuasive and even hopeful when Ross finds pathos behind the irony and doesn't let politics drown out musical pleasure.

Ross favors composers who let their vulnerabilities shape their music yet were not destroyed in the process.

Ross's emphasis on the political settings of modern music mirrors the general tendency of musicology today, especially the ideas of Richard Taruskin, the grand master of the field. Due in part to Taruskin's groundbreaking work on Stravinsky, the study of twentieth-century music has moved from the field of music theory to musicology, a historical discipline. While theorists see themselves as allies of composers and have treated twentieth-century music as a series of quasi-scientific discoveries, musicologists study the age of modernism as just another chapter of the past, something to be examined rather than defended.

Unlike earlier histories, however, which were either textbook surveys or polemics (Theodor Adorno's *Philosophy of New Music*, Henry Pleasants's *The Agony of Modern Music*), Ross's book does not present the history of twentieth-century music as a story of ascendant (or descendant) modernism. The composers—dead white European males, it should be noted—who command his most sustained attention are Strauss, Sibelius, Britten and Messiaen, all of whom pursued paths that veered away from the constellation of the hard-as-nails modernists Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Bartók and Boulez. The warring giants Schoenberg and Stravinsky appear in the book, but Ross is more passionate about composers who allowed their vulnerabilities to shape their music yet somehow were not destroyed in the process.

At the same time, Ross's book mirrors the ambivalence toward modernism that prevails on the American music scene today. (Western Europeans still have not received the antimodernist memo.) Although our culture prizes innovation, many composers, performers and presenters blame modernism for their problems in finding audiences, attracting attention or just balancing the budget: Schoenberg has much to answer for. Composer John Adams presciently foresaw our current skepticism of modernist progress in his symphonic *Harmonielehre*, composed in 1985. Adams named his piece after the title of Schoenberg's harmony theory book to underscore a historic parting of the ways. Though published in 1911, two years after his first atonal breakthroughs, Schoenberg's treatise restated traditional tonal theory: Was he hedging his bets? That same year Jean Sibelius wrote his Symphony No. 4, wrestling with the forces of disorder that pushed Schoenberg over the edge but reaching different conclusions. Adams's work could have been titled *The Road Not Taken*. Following Adams, leaning (perhaps too deferentially) on recent musicology and invoking the tragic history of Thomas Mann's accursed fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn as a guide, Ross sees the course of modernism more as a result of idiosyncratic reactions and fatal personal choices than as a unified progressive achievement.

Despite Ross's command of recent scholarship, his approach is traditional. He writes about composers and their works, not institutions, critics or performers—indeed, throughout the book the music seems to be playing itself. Ross makes a small nod in the direction of Joseph Horowitz's writings in a brief passage on the mass-marketing of classical music on American radio. But he seems to reject Horowitz's larger contention that American music, at least in the twentieth century, was shaped by performers, not composers. He does not discuss Jascha Heifetz, Arthur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, Wanda Landowska, Glenn Gould or Maria Callas, all artists who influenced the course of twentieth-century classical music as much as any composer; he examines Leonard Bernstein the composer but not Bernstein the conductor or educator. Ross writes eloquently about gay composers but seems unmoved by feminist musicology. Where are Laurie Anderson and Meredith Monk, among others?

Nor is Ross interested in reception history, which tracks the evolution of the reputations of pieces and composers. The prices of shares in Bartók, Schoenberg, Hindemith and Webern have fluctuated wildly during the past five decades, but Ross hardly discusses the mechanisms of musical marketing. Sometimes his emphasis on a work's genesis clouds his historical sense. In a section devoted to turn-of-the-century Viennese modernism, he calls Webern's *Six Pieces for Orchestra (Op. 6)* the finest example of atonal composition, yet it was barely known until after World War II. By contrast, Ross has next to nothing to say about another atonal masterpiece, *Pierrot Lunaire*, which from its premiere in 1912 convinced so many listeners of the expressive validity of Schoenberg's "emancipated" dissonances and glow-in-the-dark tone colors. Does Ross downplay *Pierrot*, much as he blows off Mahler's Ninth as a "long goodbye," on historical grounds or aesthetic ones? Or is he simply declining to discuss works for which there is already a considerable body of literature? It's hard to tell.

The Rest Is Noise is divided into three sections. The first retells the glories of the Golden Age of classical music in the decadent decade before World War I. What a time to be a composer! Composers were treated like "princes of the realm," as Alma Mahler said of her husband and Strauss after a music festival in then-German Strassburg in 1905. On

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that occasion, neither composer seemed to mind that his music had been enlisted in a *Kulturkampf* to celebrate the might of the German Empire. In this contested Alsatian setting, the supersized, densely contrapuntal new works chosen for the occasion, Mahler's Fifth Symphony and Strauss's *Symphonia Domestica* (alongside Brahms's Fourth and the obligatory Beethoven's Ninth), could be heard as proof of not only Germanic musical superiority but also German scientific and intellectual prowess. (The Germanophile French writer Romain Rolland complained that there was no Debussy on the program to offset German triumphalism.) Instead of discussing politics, the two princes of orchestral composition met in a piano store, where Strauss mesmerized the Mahlers by performing the almost completed score of his opera *Salome*—a work whose success would propel Strauss to international stardom and whose calculatedly scandalous fusion of German realism and French Symbolism would inspire calculatedly scandalous works like *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Le Sacre du printemps* within just a few years.

Ross rightly gives *Salome* the attention it has rarely received at the hands of those modernist critics who viewed the composer of *Ariadne auf Naxos* as an apostate to the cause even before he was politically compromised during World War II. Ross emphasizes two aspects of *Salome*, which he in turn makes the leitmotifs of his discussion of modern music in general: its basis in questionable ideas and its huge popularity despite, or because of, its shocking story and sounds. A century ago, modern music was headline news; even in distant New York, and in a far different cultural environment, Irving Berlin exploited the notoriety of Strauss's opera with a hit novelty tune, "Sadie Salome, Go Home!"

But the music's vitality sprang from malevolent elements. This golden age of music was also the golden age of imperialism, racism, anti-Semitism and misogyny; the best and brightest exploited, promoted and rarely criticized these noxious notions. Much as department stores ransacked the globe for goods to stimulate the appetites of consumers, composers pursued every variety of exoticism that gunboats and Foreign Legions put within reach. And yet this music—that of Puccini, Strauss, Mahler, Debussy and Ravel—belied later modernist myths of rejection and resistance: a novelty-hungry public embraced most of their works, along with the early works of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, as instant classics. And despite the warnings of *M. Butterfly*, David Henry Hwang's postimperialist riposte to Puccini, we still listen to them with guiltless pleasure today. Only after the war did new music lose touch with an audience and seem to withdraw into a narrow ghetto of unfestive festivals and competing cliques; for the first time in musical history, composers viewed the "everyday" as another planet.

Ross presents the 1920s in terms of the dancing-on-a-volcano mood of Ravel's *La Valse*, but the ground-shifting cataclysm had already happened. The Great War severed the thread of European musical history. The defeat of Germany and Austria put the musical tradition of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms on the losing side. Three empires (Russia, Germany, Austria) that had prided themselves on their music were a shambles. Experimental societies arose in Russia, Germany and Italy, and the heartless musical styles of factory music, Constructivism and Futurism mirrored their social agendas. Just as important was the spread of jazz beyond the confines of New Orleans. The development of cheap phonographs for soldiers in the trenches of France gave a regional folk genre a global audience. The Jazz Age began; a non-European, nonclassical musical genre defined a decade.

Unfortunately, Ross adopts a Eurocentric view of jazz. Instead of examining how Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Jelly Roll Morton and Duke Ellington, among others, cultivated the new form to an astonishing early maturity, he focuses on the transatlantic imitations of Satie, Stravinsky, Milhaud, Poulenc, Hindemith and Weill. Europe had discovered a new source of exoticism, and by this time techniques of musical colonization were second nature to conservatory-hatched composers. Take a saxophone, add a muted trumpet and some Bach, stir, and presto: a charming exercise in chic primitivism. This European slant obscures the obvious answer to the question Ross raises in chapters on postwar Paris, Berlin and New York: why was new music suddenly cut off from the audiences that had thrilled to its innovations just a decade earlier? The answer is that new forms of music had arrived, under the general rubric of jazz, that were more in touch with the times, more expressive, more creative than anything the classical composers could produce. Just consider how many popular songs from this period are still part of our musical consciousness, and then try humming a few bars of Hindemith or Milhaud, who were considered hot classical commodities at the time. Or listen to Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines playing "West End Blues," a touchstone of the jazz canon, which Ross ignores.

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The audience was not shrinking; classical music was. Thanks to phonograph recordings and radio, the audience for all music had multiplied exponentially. The new technologies leveled the older hierarchy of music, a pecking order based on venue. Music played in an opera house had been deemed better than music played in a pub or bordello. Now your living room could be an opera house—or a bordello. Emerging from a record player or radio, all music was created equal, but some pieces were more vital than others. For the rest of the century classical composition would try to reestablish its former artistic hegemony, but the battle was already lost by the mid '20s. Today newspapers use the terms "music" and even "contemporary music" only for popular genres; classical music is relegated to "The Arts."

Perhaps the oddest chapter in the book is "Invisible Men," which concerns American composers in the 1920s, a grab bag that includes Charles Ives, before he was discovered; Will Marion Cook, who remains a curiosity of genius battling racism; and Ellington and Gershwin, who were anything but invisible. Yet as Carol Oja argues in her book *Making Music Modern* (2000), even the bad-boy radicals of the Jazz Age—like Varèse, Antheil, Cowell and Copland—attracted media attention within a rich cultural marketplace that was also witnessing a boom in popular song, blues and jazz. Ross's preservation of European notions of composing leads him to underestimate the stylistic synthesis that was a common goal of New York modernists and overlook the way cultural categories were evolving in mongrel Manhattan. Ellington was not a composer in the European sense; he was a virtuoso impresario—at once composer, pianist, bandleader, arranger, improviser and celebrity—whose music tapped African-American sources that remain invisible in Ross's book because they are not valued as "composition." Similarly, to speak of Gershwin, or American popular music throughout the century, without paying close attention to Irving Berlin or Harold Arlen pushes the monumental achievement now called the Great American Songbook into the shadows. Invisibility is in the mind of the beholder.

In the middle of the eve-of-destruction view of the '20s, Ross inserts the first of just two chapters devoted to single figures. His extended essays on Jean Sibelius and Benjamin Britten are two of the finest examples I know of the *New Yorker* profile genre. They also clarify Ross's larger vision. The book, so scrupulous in its acknowledgment of sources, makes little use of the first-person singular, or autobiographical anecdotes; at one point Ross refers to himself as "the author of this book." It also does not seem thesis-driven, aside from Ross grandly announcing that his story is "the cultural predicament of the composer in the twentieth century." That is a vast Taruskinian claim and does not really explain Ross's approach. Although he spends much time discussing new music's cultural and political context, he is particularly drawn to enigmatic figures, composers whose lives and careers contain unanswerable questions. Why did Sibelius sit on his Eighth Symphony for thirty years and then destroy it? (Alcoholism, depression, modernist cabals?) Was Strauss a feckless opportunist, or did his card player's blank expression (he favored skat) hide a capacity for self-understanding that we hear in the music—or, at any rate, that we would like to hear in it? (Is *Metamorphosen* an elegy for Hitler or for Strauss?) How did Britten, who by current standards might be branded a sexual predator, understand or sublimate his lifelong erotic attraction to pre-adolescent boys? (Does *Death in Venice* re-enact the fixation or transcend it?)

Ross's objects of special attention are all holy sinners (like Mann's Leverkühn) whose music and motives defy explanation or judgment. Late in the book, Ross writes that at the end of the *War Requiem*, wherein Britten gives Wilfred Owen's poem "Strange Meeting" a homoerotic charge that has troubled some critics, the composer "cuts through the false complexities of politics." That's a stunning phrase coming after some 400 pages of music and political intrigue, but it showcases Ross's preference for the personal over the political.

And yet politics must be given its due. Ross hits his stride in the central part of the book, depressing as it is. His accounts of music in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany should give pause to those who assume that government support is inherently good for the arts, but I wonder if the moral failures of so many musicians in these regimes were just magnified versions of careerist ambitions that seemed tolerable in less desperate times. On the other hand, many of the dire compromises of the period can appear to stem less from opportunism than from a delusional utopianism that placed art in the service of politics. For many composers, the diabolical wedding of culture and politics seemed to offer a benign cure for their feelings of isolation. Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini (and Mrs. Roosevelt) really cared about music. Dancing with wolves would warp musical culture for decades to come.

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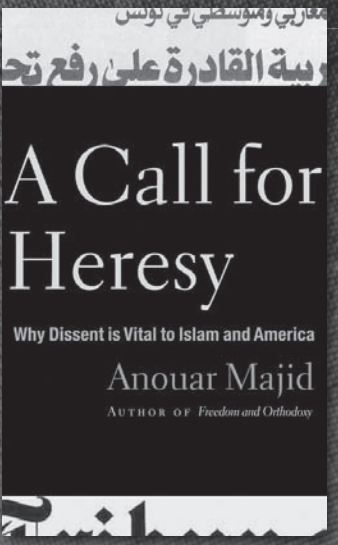

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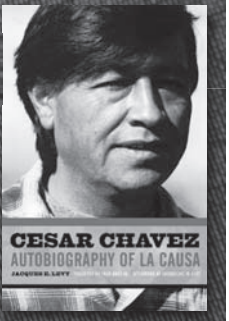

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Tales of composers behaving badly in Germany and the Soviet Union are all too familiar by now. But Ross seems less interested than some scholars in finding either heroes or villains in this grim period. Strauss and Shostakovich attract his attention because they confound any easy alignment of moral and aesthetic judgment. The behavior of Strauss, who has never been accused of underestimating his worth, does not inspire either objectivity or sympathy. For one, he imagined that the Nazis would be good for the music business.

Ross has a Eurocentric view of jazz—he focuses on Satie's jazz imitations instead of Ellington's mature music.

Ross writes that "the composer of *Salome* warmed to Hitler chiefly because he thought that under the aegis of this music-loving chancellor he would be able to enact a series of long-dreamed-of reforms—new royalty schemes favoring classical composers over popular ones; the extension of composers' copyrights; rules preventing spa orchestras from massacring Wagner overtures; guidelines discouraging young people from ruining their voices by bellowing patriotic songs." Later Strauss introduced himself to American GIs as "the composer of *Rosenkavalier*" and imagined he could free his Jewish in-laws from Theresienstadt merely by announcing his name. And yet throughout the war, Strauss composed exquisite music, like the transformation scene in *Daphne* (1938) and the closing scene of *Capriccio* (1942), surpassing even *Rosenkavalier* as a *comédie larmoyante*. It is hard to think of any works of music more at odds with their surroundings; it's the kind of music that gives the adjective "radiant" a bad reputation.

Shostakovich usually gets a more sympathetic treatment than Strauss, but, as Ross shows, their cases are not dissimilar. Both men could toe the party line one day and retreat into something resembling internal exile the next, and both lent their prestige to brutal regimes. Ross reprises the familiar story of the Fifth Symphony (which Shostakovich wrote in 1937 amid the Great Terror after being denounced in *Pravda* the previous year) and restates the unanswerable question raised by its blaringly affirmative conclusion: "Who or what is triumphing?" Ross refuses to draw the many clues he detects in the music (references to *Carmen*, allusions to Pushkin) to a neat conclusion, but he does note that most listeners accepted the affirmation at face value. The symphony quickly traveled around the world; critics and audiences heard the course of the work from oppression to victory as a much-needed twentieth-century equivalent to Beethoven's Fifth.

Ross's account of the CIA's influence on European music after World War II brings to the public eye an issue that has been simmering in musicological circles. Charged with reconstituting and de-Nazifying German musical life and then locked in a battle with the KGB for the minds of Western European intellectuals, the CIA secretly funded festivals and journals that promoted post-Webernism, a style of musical radicalism, neither American nor Soviet, that was, with the exception of the works of Communist composer Luigi Nono, apolitical. This well-masked patronage tamed politics into formalism; serialists denounced nonserialists the way party members attacked Trotskyites. The semitalented Mr. Ripley of the postwar scene was Stravinsky's own booster-cum-CIA operative, Nicholas Nabokov, a colorful and slippery player who also had a hand in promoting Elliott Carter's music.

Unfortunately, *The Rest Is Noise* devotes relatively little space to the last third of the century, and aside from a sustained hagiography of Olivier Messiaen, Ross's account of the era is a breathless roll call of names and movements similar to that found in Paul Griffiths's several books on the period, though with an occasional hint of ironic bemusement at the absurd circuslike quality of the avant-garde scene. Ross doesn't wax sentimental about the vanguard, nor is he much attracted to the "maverick" line in American music, though he gives it its due. Despite a century of antiart and fifty years of rock and roll, he's still a symphony and opera kind of guy, which brings him, naturally, to the composer of *Harmonielehre* and *Nixon in China*, John Adams.

Conspicuously absent from the book is the full text of Ross's superb *New Yorker* profile of Adams, "The Harmonist" (reprinted in *The John Adams Reader*), which would have complemented the Sibelius and Britten chapters. The profile ends ecstatically: "I hummed Adams' palm-tree song [from *El Niño*] to myself, and it seemed to me that I had just spent the morning with a man who was never going to die." Adams is one of the few composers in the book whom Ross has interviewed at length—and so, uniquely in the book, we feel his immediate presence, his voice and his personality. (In his acknowledgments, Ross says that Adams inspired the book's style; he might have thanked Adams for its worldview as well.) The Adams profile, lacking the studiously impersonal stance of *The Rest Is Noise*, is also a profile of Ross, a far more passion-driven enthusiast than the nearly invisible narrator of the book. The contrast raises a gnawing question about the book's dutiful pursuit of a kind of official party-line judgment, vetted by a sizable group of scholars at the expense of the daringly personal approach that has characterized Ross's *New Yorker* writings since at least his uncloseted review of Wayne Koestenbaum's *The Queen's Throat* in 1993.

Unlike Ross, I don't think Adams is peerless in American music today; Joan Tower, for one, is an equally skilled and original composer. Adams's work, however, seems in touch with the full range of the music discussed in *The Rest Is Noise*, from Sibelius to Ligeti and from Ives to Carl Stalling (the composer for the Warner Brothers cartoons), and his relation to the cultural issues latent in all this music is complex without being nihilistic. Adams still believes in the masterpiece; his huge orchestral work *Naive and Sentimental Music* takes up the heroic, visionary, affirmative stance of Sibelius's Fifth. Like Mahler's symphonies and Strauss's tone poems, it is a big work, aimed at a big audience. But is there a big audience for music still rooted in the classical tradition and that still embraces the modernist demand for difficulty? For all his references to popular culture, Adams is no populist. At the Los Angeles Philharmonic premiere of *Naive and Sentimental Music* in February 1999, many in the audience seemed baffled; they would have preferred John Williams to John Adams. Is Adams's neo-Romanticism as quixotic as the neoclassicism of an earlier generation?

In our boutique culture, any notion of an aesthetic mainstream seems as quaintly obsolete as *The Ed Sullivan Show* or *American Bandstand*. Today everyone wants to be alternative; the quirky, edgy side of much contemporary classical music, typified by the punk style and diverse repertory of the Kronos Quartet, now seems like a virtue, not a problem. But the symphony orchestra and the opera house are not boutiques. They are civic institutions designed to present works of an encompassing social vision. Such music will not play itself (at least for a few years to come). It will require intelligent and sympathetic performers. And it will not explain itself. It will need intelligent, sympathetic critics. We are fortunate that Alex Ross is well suited to the task. ■

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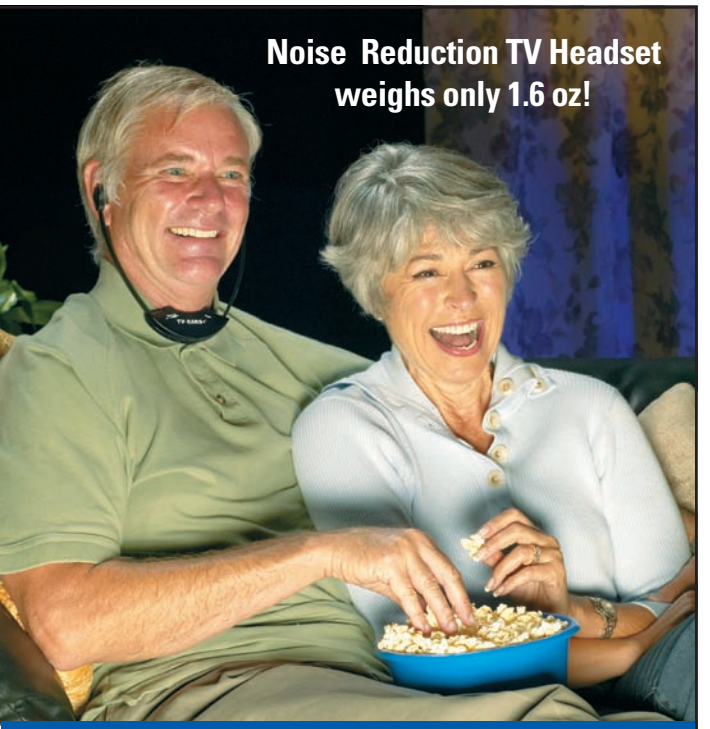

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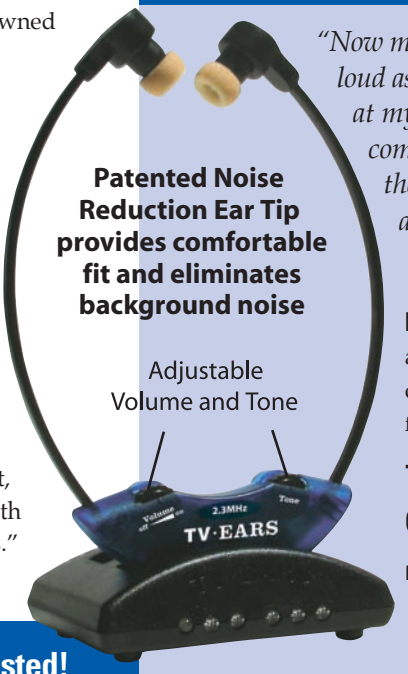
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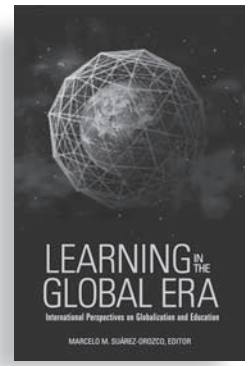
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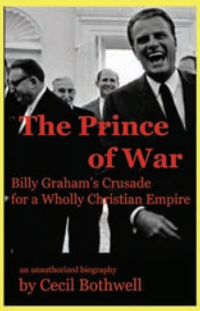
Billy Graham and the politics of fear ...



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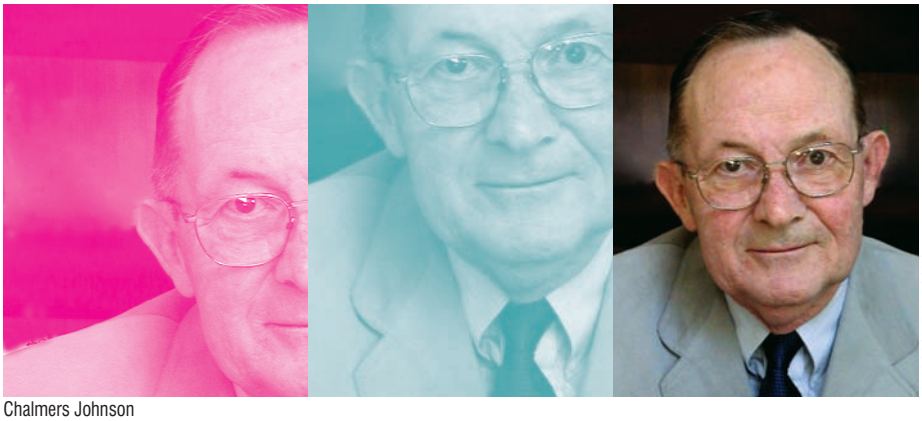

METROPOLITAN BOOKS

Chalmers Johnson

Apocalypse Now?

by STEPHEN HOLMES

Is there anything historically unprecedented about the Bush Administration's military adventurism, intense secrecy and fearmongering? This question is vexing, especially to those historians and political scientists who, however appalled by current US foreign policy, cannot be genuinely surprised by the most recent incarnation of an imperial presidency. But it remains a critical question, not least because the answer to it could shed light on what progressives can hope to achieve after Bush.

Chalmers Johnson, a former Navy man, cold war consultant to the CIA and emeritus professor at the University of California, San Diego, helps us unravel this mystery by breathing new life into an old myth. In ancient Greece, Nemesis was the goddess of divine retribution for acts of hubris. Transgressions would never go unpunished; balance and proportion would inevitably be restored. The contemporary incarnation of Nemesis is "blowback," a notion apparently coined by the CIA and commonly used to explain the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 as a form of delayed revenge for the American-orchestrated overthrow of Mohammed Mossadegh's democratically elected government in 1953. Admonitory aphorisms about self-defeating aggression—malefactors reap what they sow—also provide the best general framework for understanding the origins of 9/11, or so Johnson would have us believe in *Nemesis*, the third volume of "an inadvertent trilogy" that includes *Blowback* (2000) and *The Sorrows of Empire* (2004).

Johnson has no patience for those who attribute 9/11-style terrorism to a clash of civilizations or an unchanging "Salafi radicalism" and its irredeemably wicked adherents. He argues that anti-American rage, rather than emerging fully formed from a highly malleable religious tradition, has been triggered by decades of immoral and illegal behavior by American officials and proxies abroad. It is unavoidable that some of these "secret U.S. government operations and acts in distant lands would come back to haunt us," Johnson writes. He is thinking of covert actions well-known to Iranians and Guatemalans and Chileans (not to mention the US agents who carried them out) but that have barely penetrated the consciousness of most American citizens.

Identifying blowback as the root cause of 9/11, Johnson also argues that Bush's excessively violent and lawless reaction to the attack, in both Afghanistan and Iraq, will provoke blowback of its own. Significantly, because Johnson inaugurated his three-part series before the Bush Administration had begun to inflict its impulsiveness and inexperience on the world in earnest, he presents Bush's militarized response to 9/11 less as a sharp departure from the military policies of preceding administrations than as a predictable continuation of them, stressing, for instance, that "the United States has been continuously engaged in or mobilized for war since 1941."

Extrapolating freely from the documented history of blowback, Johnson speculates that we have already entered the "last days" of the Republic. America's post–World War II "imperialism," he predicts, will soon put an end to self-government in the United

Nemesis

The Last Days of the American Republic.
By Chalmers Johnson.
Metropolitan. 354 pp. $26.

Stephen Holmes teaches at New York University School of Law. His latest book is The Matador's Cape: America's Reckless Response to Terror.

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States: "I believe that to maintain our empire abroad requires resources and commitments that will inevitably undercut our domestic democracy and in the end produce a military dictatorship or its civilian equivalent." The destruction of the American Republic may even illustrate a profound historical regularity, he implies: "Over any fairly lengthy period of time, successful imperialism requires that a domestic republic or a domestic democracy change into a domestic tyranny." He even thinks that the American military is now "ripe" for "a Julius Caesar"—that is, for "a revolutionary, military populist with little interest in republican niceties so long as some form of emperorship lies at the end of his rocky path."

Johnson's conviction that imperialism tends to transform democracies into autocracies is based largely on his study of ancient Rome. He argues that the basic dynamics of Rome's imperial adventures and annexation of conquered territory ushered in the collapse of the Roman Republic. As sporadic and regional military campaigns were replaced by continuous and distant ones, Rome's citizen army had to be replaced by a standing army. Loyal not to political classes in Rome but to their commanders in the field, the professionalized Roman legions made it possible for Caesar to initiate the dismantling of the Republic brought to a conclusion by his grand-nephew Augustus.

"Roman history suggests that the short, happy life of the American republic may be coming to its end," Johnson writes, adding that "Bush has unleashed a political crisis comparable to the one Julius Caesar posed for the Roman constitution," threatening to subvert the traditional constitutional order and put dictatorship in its place. Rather than relying on a standing army and a Praetorian Guard, our cardboard Caesar from Crawford is backed by the Pentagon and its affiliated weapons contractors, not to mention the CIA: "The United States today, like the Roman Republic in the first century, BC, is threatened by an out-of-control military-industrial complex and a huge secret government controlled exclusively by the president." Imperial republics, Johnson suggests, are destined to be destroyed by an inner contradiction.

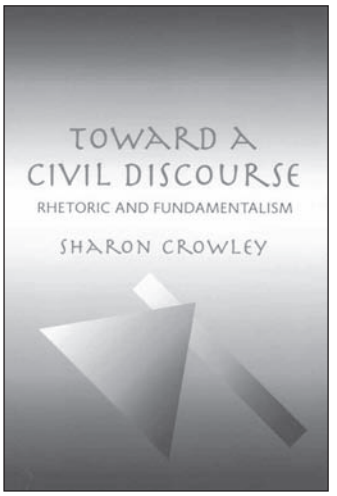
One reason for Johnson's end-of-days gloom is that he can identify no power center capable of resisting the forces that currently drive American foreign policy. He claims that because of the costliness of reelection campaigns and the insidious influence of Congressional lobbyists, "the legislative branch of our government is broken."

OPEN DEBATE?

TOWARD A CIVIL DISCOURSE

Rhetoric and Fundamentalism

BY SHARON CROWLEY



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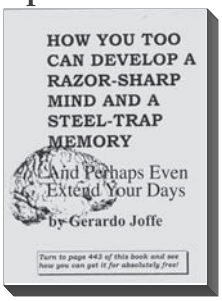

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An elected body that owes its incumbency partly to military contractors (who, in turn, provide not only campaign funding but also jobs for voters in swing districts) cannot reasonably be expected to swivel around and eliminate the corruption that nourishes it. In Johnson's words, "our political system may no longer be capable of saving the United States as we know it, since it is hard to imagine any president or Congress standing up to the powerful vested interests of the Pentagon, the secret intelligence agencies, and the military-industrial complex."

But if Congress cannot slam on the brakes, what of the American people? In a few passages, Johnson flirts with the hope that a genuinely democratic movement might possibly put a halt to America's self-defeating militarism. He even tries to explain away the public's early support for the war in Iraq by recycling the traditional excuse about good kings being misled by evil advisers, suggesting that well-meaning American citizens have been deceived by a perfidious corporate media.

The duping of the public brings us to one of Johnson's central claims, namely that America's violent overreaction to 9/11 was due in part to the manufactured ignorance of American voters about their government's homicidal and exploitative actions abroad. Ignorant of the numerous ways the misconduct of the United States has excited a craving for retaliation around the world, Americans necessarily saw 9/11 as a wholly unprovoked attack and therefore as an attack requiring not self-examination but military annihilation of the enemy. The illusion that 9/11 came from nowhere, Johnson argues, that it had nothing to do with America's past behavior in the Arab world, contributed to the flaring of aggressive emotions among Americans.

This is an interesting thought. But before we lay all the blame on newspapers and networks that may have deceived the American public, we need to consider the possibility that many Americans did not and do not want to be informed about the misdeeds of their own government abroad. A majority of the electorate supported Bush for some time after the pretexts for the Iraq War were exposed as mendacious and the appalling behavior of some American personnel at Abu Ghraib became well-known. Support waned only after the war turned into an undeniable and embarrassing fiasco, not because a large majority was appalled that the war had been launched on false pretenses or conducted by immoral and illegal means.

For his part, Johnson desperately wants his fellow citizens to look at their country, if only for a moment, through the eyes of others. He almost begs his American readers to imagine what it would be like to have foreign soldiers stationed on bases inside the United States, molesting teenage American girls and running over American pedestrians while driving drunk. That anyone is listening is doubtful, however, which is why Johnson, in the end, lodges no more hope in American citizens than in the Congress they periodically elect. America's chilling disregard, not merely to the plight of ordinary Iraqis today but even to the deaths, since the 2003 invasion, of tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of civilians who had never harmed any Americans, springs from sources deep within American political culture. It was not produced by Karl Rove's *trompe l'oeil* propaganda and cannot be overcome by Chalmers Johnson's scholarship, however penetrating and thoughtful.

How, then, can Johnson, after surveying the illegal and immoral acts of previous American Presidents, go on to accuse the Bush Administration of betraying American traditions? How can he recount, in dismaying detail, the history of American bullying overseas but also avoid normalizing, and thereby to some extent exonerating, the actions of Bush and his circle? He struggles to avoid normalizing Bush by portraying the Administration not only as perpetuating deplorable habits of militarism and hubris but also as deviating from an American ideal of democratic anti-imperialism whose restoration he tries to imagine. In the end, he indicts the Administration principally for its radical subversion of traditional checks and balances. Under Bush, more than ever before, the separation of powers "increasingly appears to be a dead letter."

Admittedly, the "atrophying of the legislative and judicial branches" has been going on for decades. Black budgets have weakened executive-branch accountability, and the power of the purse has been diluted by various other gimmicks, including the stashing of off-budget funds in the CIA's secret Swiss bank accounts by dubious allies with obscure agendas, such as the Saudi royal family. Even the most illustrious of Bush's predecessors, moreover, have exercised excessive executive power during wartime. Johnson reminds us that "Abraham Lincoln suspended the right of habeas corpus; Woodrow Wilson had his 'Red Scare' with the illegal jailing or deportation of people who opposed his intervention in World War I; Franklin Roosevelt conducted a pogrom against Americans of Japanese ancestry, incarcerating almost all of them in the continental United States in detention

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camps." In the past, however, or so Johnson argues, "the separation of powers, even if no longer a true balance of power, continued to serve as a check on any claims of presidential dominance." That last rampart has now been breached, he concludes, pointing to warrantless wiretaps and ghost prisons as conspicuous examples of unilateral executive actions undertaken with negligible oversight or accountability.

This line of analysis is quite promising. Behind checks and balances lies a simple insight: an executive branch that is consistently shielded from well-informed criticisms is highly unlikely to perform well. The executive needs and deserves some degree of secrecy, especially in national security affairs. But secrecy can easily become excessive—and when it does, it begins to overprotect the official view of reality, based as it is on tunnel vision, overconfidence, whimsical fixations, failures of contingency planning, blindness to noxious side effects of superficially appealing strategies and the effective capture of government agencies by private-sector profiteers. By stressing the pathological effects of excessive executive-branch secrecy and the inability of a corrupted legislature to challenge it effectively, Johnson brings us a step closer to understanding the historical uniqueness of the Bush Administration.

A step closer, but a step short nevertheless. Earlier incarnations of the imperial presidency, especially under Nixon, can be characterized in much the same way. To understand what makes the current Administration seem unprecedented in American history, therefore, it's probably best to focus on the expansion of executive secrecy and the concomitant weakening of checks and balances, undertaken in response not to a palpable threat from a militarily powerful hostile state but to evanescent and unquantifiable threats from future unknown jihadists. For the executive to ask Congress and the country, on the basis of undisclosed information, for unchecked powers to fight an enemy whose true capacities are impossible to ascertain and who will perhaps continue to lurk in the shadows forever—that is truly unprecedented. The United States may not yet be in the last days of the Republic, as Johnson warns. But the country has never faced a problem quite like this. Can an eighteenth-century Constitution prevent the executive branch from using a twenty-first century terrorist threat as an all-purpose pretext for concocting secret illicit agendas unrelated to American national security? Can a weakened system of checks and balances fend off an executive power grab in a semi-permanent climate of public fear provoked by invisible dangers? Even those who hope that the answer will be yes may honorably fear that the answer will be no.

From Johnson's perspective, neither Congress nor the American public nor the Democratic Party offers much hope. Gazing into his crystal ball, Johnson reports that "we will never again know peace, nor in all probability survive very long as a nation, unless we abolish the CIA, restore intelligence collecting to the State Department, and remove all but purely military functions from the Pentagon." The United States will be embroiled in foreign wars until it collapses, in other words. At this point, we can finally grasp the force of Johnson's farfetched analogy between George W. Bush and Julius Caesar. A Democratic Brutus may deliver a fatal blow to the Bush political machine in 2008, but the chances of saving the country by returning it to idealized republican origins are nil.

A high-spirited book full of arresting details, *Nemesis* is nevertheless marred by several implausible claims, most of them associated with the strained analogy between ancient Rome and contemporary America. The book's principal shortcoming, however, is the inherent slipperiness of the concept of blowback. Johnson's determination to establish that subsequent harms to America are caused by prior American misdeeds often seems fanciful. The following is typical: "On August 5, 1998, the International Islamic Front for Jihad, in a letter to an Arab-language newspaper in London, promised a reprisal for recent U.S. renditions from Albania. Two days later, al-Qaeda blew up the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania with a loss of 224 lives." Such intimations of causality don't quite succumb to the fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, but they veer perilously close. Moreover, when American bullying does not produce the predicted American setback (as when the bad behavior of American soldiers in Japan does not cause the Japanese to close US bases there), Johnson readily discovers countervailing causal forces (such as the Japanese need to support US bases to pre-empt the rise of Chinese power in East Asia) and thereby casts doubt on the inevitability of negative fallout from America's unrestrained behavior abroad.

But the largest problem with blowback is the sheer miscellaneous variety of Johnson's examples. Given Cheney's historically unsubstantiated conviction that violence, if violent enough, invariably generates compliance, Johnson is right to stress the contrary, namely that violence often breeds violence, imperial oppression fostering anticolonial terrorism, for instance. But most of the un-

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intended negative consequences of American policy to which Johnson draws our attention have only a tenuous relation to the breeding of violence by violence: for instance, how habits of borrowing without forethought from Japan's and China's central banks risk driving the United States into bankruptcy, or how the antisatellite warfare for which the Pentagon is planning would inevitably create orbital debris so extensive as to destroy the effectiveness of satellite-based telecommunications.

Such examples of self-defeating behavior are so diverse that the purpose of grouping them together, without any attempt to distinguish or relate them, sometimes seems merely rhetorical. True enough, serendipity is ubiquitous in human history, and those who indulge in omnipotent fantasies will eventually come crashing to earth. But the amply documented unpredictability of history makes it hard to take seriously Johnson's seer's pose. Similarly, his tendency to discover the inevitable unfolding of higher justice in every unintended consequence of immoral behavior can only be ascribed to wishful thinking.

To dwell on such theoretical shortcomings is not to deny that *Nemesis* is a serious contribution to current debates, richly repaying careful study. True, readers skeptical about blowback will have to unearth other, less mythological, sources of hope than Johnson's curious conceit that America's wrongdoings will be justly punished by an inexorable fate. But the chances of finding equivalent consolation in the nonmythical world are probably not very great. ■

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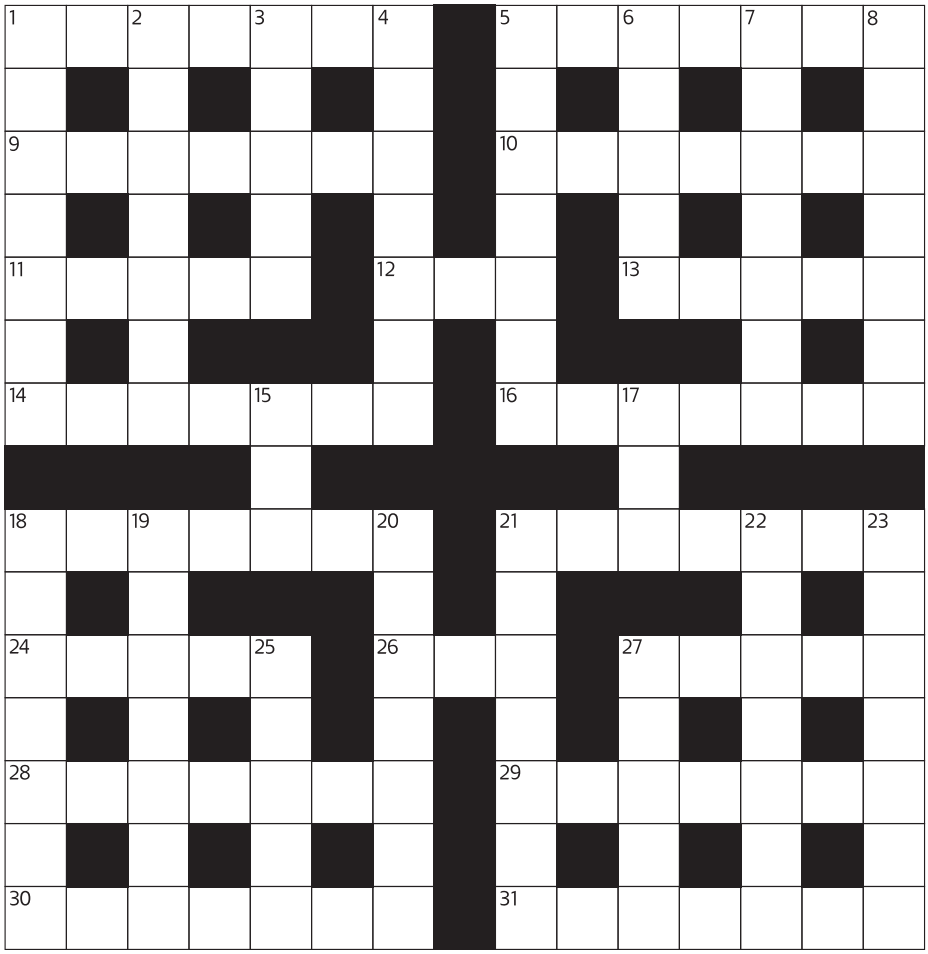

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1 Cut out an important part, and bring it in. (7)

5 Be quiet! Let this be far from deep! (7)

9 Show to be true, and all right inside, but it is a way to annoy you! (7)

10 An important number, not out to say a trembling "Hello!" (7)

11 Musical work. (5)

12 Urge one on, with a layer being responsible for it. (3)

13 A pretty little one, sliced, that is! (5)

14 Performs part of the dance, and talks about what is left in the tray. (7)

16 Tells us what a newsman does. (7)

18 Went fast because of the slippery stuff inside, but you don't want your kids to be. (7)

21 Such as Kane. (7)

24 Setting the timer will show what goes on top. (5)

26 May be the slippery type. In all but the head of the place where steersmen hang out. (3)

27 Temporary quarters sound a bit nervous. (5)

28 How some liquids move is so wrong, but a short time to the little sibling. (7)

29 Coming out with the former spouse dug in, possibly. (7)

30 Fancy furs the Queen digs! (7)

31 Bring me back by a stupid person in it to find a house of representatives. (7)

DOWN

1 Hurried up around Myrna, and gets things done. (7)

2 Lets things get a little less tight, with one loss to worry about. (7)

3 Voilà! It's crazy, but instrumental. (5)

4 Joints once were, but points about east. (7)

5 One who puts on airs about the junction of the insect's weapon. (7)

6 How a cut-up behaves at the end of the large waters. (5)

7 Not so heavy that you can't keep it in your pocket! (7)

8 Those who perform tasks, or wrecks badly damaged and missing a number. (7)

15 Awkward ones are this with 27s. (3)

17 You might like to stand this way. (3)

18 Unnamed person, therefore I objectively wind up with a single. (7)

19 It's the best! (7)

20 Even a man does each day, but not with these on. (7)

21 Vie, to come about the favorite. (7)

22 "Amazin'!" Nia said. "Look inside for the flowers." (7)

23 Could be very pretty, but goes wrong with an old-fashioned negative about it. (7)

25 Does this make a bow more acceptable? No Sir! You're confused! (5)

27 It's one way to get a lift, as Little Tom proves! (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3099

■	I	N	C	A	R	C	E	R	A	T	I	O	N	■
K	■	A	■	U	■	O	■	I	■	R	■	V	■	S
E	G	R	E	T	■	N	E	G	L	I	G	E	N	T
M	■	R	■	H	■	S	■	H	■	P	■	R	■	R
P	H	O	T	O	S	T	A	T	■	S	E	P	I	A
T	■	W	■	R	■	R	■	■	■	■	■	A	■	N
■	■	■	D	I	S	A	P	P	E	A	R	I	N	G
I	■	E	■	N	■	I	■	E	■	B	■	D	■	E
S	E	X	A	G	E	N	A	R	I	A	N	■	■	■
O	■	E	■	■	■	■	■	E	■	S	■	P	■	P
T	O	G	A	S	■	C	O	N	V	E	Y	E	R	S
O	■	E	■	W	■	O	■	N	■	M	■	R	■	A
P	O	T	P	O	U	R	R	I	■	E	A	S	E	L
E	■	I	■	O	■	G	■	A	■	N	■	O	■	M
■	S	C	I	N	T	I	L	L	A	T	I	N	G	■

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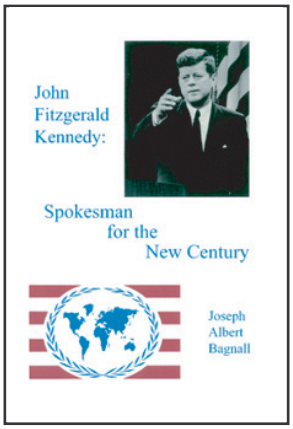

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